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CHILDRENS' DISPLAY OF PRIOR KNOWLEDGE IN LITERACY ACTIVITIES

BY

MAUREEN DUGUAY ©

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
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Date: Sept. 14, 1989

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my late father Albert Gordon Downing, who was a lifelong learner. The example he set through the value he placed on learning is what has guided me through my studies.

ABSTRACT

Recent research into the reading comprehension process emphasizes the importance of prior knowledge. This study focused on how children were making connections between their prior knowledge and the learning activities they carried out in their language arts program.

This study was descriptive and exploratory in nature, employing an ethnographic methodology known as participant observation. The researcher observed in a grade six classroom for a period of fifteen weeks, audiotaping the language arts lessons as well as doing an in-depth study with four selected informants. Formal and informal interviews were conducted with the teacher and informants which were audiotaped and transcribed. Additional data was provided by observational fieldnotes as well as samples of students work and a dialogue journal which was kept to record questions and clarifications about the program that the researcher and teacher shared. The data from the above sources was examined using Spradley's Developmental Research Sequence with reference to the research questions.

It was found that children's background knowledge needs to be assessed before assigning learning tasks to ensure they have sufficient understanding to undertake the assigned tasks. When the teacher is aware of the quality and quantity of background knowledge the student brings to the tasks mediation can be provided that will best meet the individual needs of the students.

The importance of conferencing with the students as a means of understanding the connections students were making between their background knowledge and the learning tasks was evident in this study.

Teacher centered activities appeared to limit the childrens' ability to make connections between their background knowledge and the learning tasks as they were more focused on providing suitable responses for the teacher and interpreting the teachers's expectations of the tasks.

It was found that the role of the teacher and the style of teaching significantly influenced how the children were making connections between their background knowledge and the learning activities.

Those students who appeared to have a greater breadth and depth of background knowledge achieved greater success with the learning tasks.

The recommendation was made that researchers and educators continue to examine literacy development of children with reference to the classroom setting, the classroom interaction between teacher and students and the role of the teacher in building and accessing background knowledge.

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CHAPTER I

CHILDRENS' DISPLAY OF PRIOR KNOWLEDGE IN LITERACY ACTIVITIES

> What we have in our heads is a theory of what the world is like, a theory that is the basis of all our perceptions and understanding of the world, the root of all learning, the source of all hopes and fears, motives and expectancies, reasoning and creativity. And this theory is all we have. If we can make sense of the world and all it is by interpreting our interactions with the world in the light of our theory. The theory is our shield against bewilderment. (Smith, 1971, p. 57).

Recent research into the reading comprehension process emphasizes the importance of prior knowledge. Comprehension can only take place when new experiences are related to what is already known. A great deal of research suggests that a reader's prior knowledge affects the comprehension process at all levels. Pearson and Johnston (1978) have noted that prior knowledge affects decoding and word recognition by delimiting the set of words that could appear in a sentence slot. It affects short term memory by determining the amount that can be stored in working memory. It affects inference-making by determining which inference if any should be made and it affects information storage in that it determines which information will be stored and whether or not it will be retrieved.

The research on prior knowledge in the comprehension process has stressed the importance of building and activating prior knowledge before reading. The concept has emerged that reading is an active constructive or reconstructive process. Comprehension depends as much on the reader's prior knowledge as on information provided by the text. The reader must interrelate his or her prior knowledge with the text and the context in which meaning is created.

Of the studies that have been done in the area of prior knowledge and its relation to the reading comprehension process very few have been conducted in the classroom. Usually these studies have been carried out in an experimental laboratory situation where subjects are isolated from the interaction of the classroom setting. Mosenthal (1984) argues that the classroom is the missing link in reading comprehension research. Comprehension research has focused on task, text and the reader and does not examine how readers comprehend and learn to comprehend in the classroom setting. The interaction between the teacher and students, and among students themselves provide a context that needs to be explored.

In recognition of the gap that exists in research in comprehension an ethnographic approach was taken in this study in order to examine the classroom environment in which children make the connections between background knowledge and their reading tasks.

PURPOSE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to describe how children make connections between their prior knowledge and the learning activities they carry out in their language arts program in the functioning classroom.

Although much insight has been gained regarding the reading comprehension process, very little is known about how children actually make connections between new experiences and what they already know.

The research that has been done has been carried out in experimental situations. Given the nature of the comprehension process, it is important to examine it within the framework of an instructional environment. The teacher plays a significant role in providing learning experiences which the child may use to make connections between new experiences and what is already known. This interaction between teacher, students and learning activity can only be examined in the context of the learning environment.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions guided the study:

1) In what ways do children use background knowledge in their display of literacy?

2) In what ways do children display their use of background knowledge while engaging in language arts activities?

3) In what ways does the classroom context effect the students' display of background knowledge?

METHODOLOGY

This study was carried out using an ethnographic approach in order to understand the meaning that the assigned learning activities had for the participants, within the context of the classroom environment. An attempt was made to find a classroom where students were actively involved in their learning, and where materials were used that would motivate and encourage learning. The study was conducted over a fifteen week period. The researcher observed in the classroom two mornings a week for the first two weeks and three mornings a week for the remainder of the study. Students were observed during language arts instructional periods and audio tapes were made. Their work was examined and four selected students were interviewed about the learning activities, and their perceptions of the teacher's actions. In addition, the teacher was interviewed both formally and informally to discover his beliefs and perceptions about the assigned activities. A dialogue journal was also kept with the teacher to clarify and expand on discussions or questions that arose. Further interviews with the teacher and key informants were made after data collection was completed to verify or confirm any hypotheses.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The classroom make-up was rather unique because of the presence of students with behaviour problems that required extra assistance, and because the ability level of the students was rather low. The four informants who were selected because of their cooperative nature and ability to articulate well, turned out to be four students of average and above average ability. A study that focused on the weaker students may reveal additional information on the connections these students were making between their background knowledge and the same learning activities.

CHAPTER II

SURVEY OF RELATED LITERATURE

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between prior knowledge and reading comprehension has long been recognized, but the extent of the influence of background knowledge on comprehension has only recently been explored.

The term prior knowledge refers to the knowledge acquired by readers through their life experiences. Schutz (1962) calls it "stock of knowledge". Smith (1971) refers to it as both "non-visual information" and "the theory of the world in our heads". Other theorists have used the terms background knowledge, experimental knowledge, pre-reading knowledge or life memory storage. All of these terms are synonymous. In brief, prior knowledge is all the life experiences which are held in our memory.

Some of the earliest research on the importance of prior knowledge was done by the Gestalt psychologists such as Wertheimer (1912), Kohler (1947), Koffka (1935) and Wulf (1922/1938). The insight they provided was that the properties of a whole experience cannot be inferred from its parts. At that time the research that was being done on prior knowledge was being applied to visual perception. Wulf's (1922/1938) research was on memory for geometric designs. This type of research was later termed "schema" by Bartlett (1932) who is recognized as the first person to use the term.

The research Bartlett (1932) presented in his book Remembering resembled the work done by Wulf. He examined distortions contained in recall of stories specifically in the story "The War of the Ghosts." He noted that each individual appeared to try to make sense of new situations in the text in terms of experiences which had been encountered in the past. It was this new knowledge built on past experiences and situations which Bartlett termed "schema." He refers to schema as "an active organization of past reactions or past experiences." The term "active" emphasizes what he saw as the constructive character of remembering, which contrasts with the passive retrieval of fixed and lifeless memories (Bartlett, 1932, p. 201).

R. C. Anderson (1985) described schema theory as a "largely new theory of reading, a theory already accepted by the majority of scholars in the field". He explained that "according to the theory a reader's schema, or organized knowledge of the world, provides much of the basis for comprehending, learning and remembering the ideas in stories and texts" (p. 372).

Rumelhart (1980) refers to schemata as "the building blocks of cognition, the elements fundamental to all information processing." He defines schema theory as being "basically a theory about knowledge". It is a theory about how knowledge is represented and about how that representation facilitates the use of the knowledge in particular ways. According to "schema theory" all knowledge is packaged into units. These units are the schemata. Embedded in these packets of knowledge, in addition to the knowledge itself, is information about how this knowledge is to be used. According to Rumelhart the control function of schemata is the construction of an interpretation of an event, object or situation during the process of comprehension.

The assumption underlying schema theory is that meaning is not contained solely in the text but results from the interaction with the cognitive structures or "schemata" already in the readers mind.

In reference to reading comprehension Adams and Collins (1979) state, "The goal of schema theory as applied to reading comprehension is to specify the interface between the reader and the text, to specify how the reader's knowledge interacts with and shapes the information on the page and to specify how that knowledge must be organized to support the interaction" (p. 3).

Schemata are acquired through life experiences. These can be real or vicarious experiences. These experiences are stored in memory and used later when new experiences that are similar occur. These memories or schemata act as theories which aid people in making sense of the world. New experiences are added to similar existing schemata in memory or a new category is created to record the novel experiences. According to schema theorists our memory acts much the same as a computer data bank, creating semantic networks and storing experiences by creating new categories or adding to or modifying pre-existing ones.

Schemata change, or are modified, to accommodate new experiences. One of the problems involved in comprehension is that people seldom have the same schemata. In reading comprehension the reader and the author do not always have a common schemata. Because readers make sense of new information by relating it to what they already know, the quality and quantity of their prior knowledge greatly affects their interpretation of the text.

> The reader brings an entire lifetime of experiences, knowledge, and abilities to each reading situation and each of these

> substantially affects comprehension. The text represents an author's attempt to convey a message, for a reason to an anticipated audience, and each of these factors will affect the style, format, language and structure of the text, and these in turn will affect the comprehending process. The context represents all those environmental cues which are present in any communication situation and which help to shape comprehension. It is not the physical environment alone, but the specific reading task as well as the physical, psychological, and affective conditions of the reader which determine the emotional and cognitive responses which influence the meaning derived by each reader. (Langer & Smith-Burke, 1981, p. vii).

As the reader constantly tries to make sense of daily experiences, the reader's past experiences and understanding of the world coupled with his or her purpose for reading will determine what will be comprehended from the text.

Rosenblatt (1978) refers to the active involvement of the reader as being a "transactional" approach.

> The reader's attention to the text activates certain elements in his past experience - external reference, internal response - that have become linked with the verbal symbols. Meaning will emerge from a network of relationships among the things symbolized as he senses them. The symbols point to these sensations, images, objects, ideas, relationships, with the particular associations or feeling - tones created by his past experiences with them in actual life or in literature. The selection and organization of responses to some degree hinge on the assumptions, the expectations, or sense of possible structures that he brings out of the stream of his life (p. 11).

Rosenblatt also views the reading of a text as being:

> ...an event occurring at a particular time in a particular environment at a particular moment in the life history of the reader. The transaction will involve not only the past experience but also the present state and present interest or preoccupations of the reader (p. 20).

A range of meanings may be derived from a particular text based upon all the personal, environmental and cognitive influences which shape every moment of reading (Langer & Smith-Burke, 1981, p. VII).

HOW READERS USE SCHEMATA

Recent research emphasizes the active involvement of the reader when relating new experiences to the already known. The research suggests implicitly or explicitly that comprehension is dependent upon what the reader brings to the text by way of background or prior knowledge.

"As theories, schemata are a source of prediction about new objects, events, actions and sequences of actions and events." (Devine, 1986, p. 41). Not all theories can be tested by direct observations so predictions are made about things that are unobservable. Readers test theories and try to discover if predictions or hypotheses fit with what has been read. If a reader fails to find an appropriate fit, or the intended meaning of the author, comprehension may not be what was intended by the author. There may be confusion or an interpretation made by the reader that is influenced by the reader's background knowledge which may not be the same as the author's.

Spiro (1980) has emphasized the essential condition of appropriate schemata being available for comprehending a text. He also acknowledged that many reading difficulties may reflect mismatches between prior knowledge presumed by the author and that knowledge actually possessed by the reader. Spiro has suggested that schemata may be available but not accessed appropriately or efficiently. More attention needs to be paid to top-down processing difficulties that go beyond schema availability. He believes more must be said than that prior knowledge matters. The question should be asked: How is prior knowledge used? It is possible that there are a variety of things that can go wrong in top-down processing. However, unless more is known about what should be occurring, it will be difficult to precisely determine what is going wrong for the reader.

Rumelhart (1984) suggests three reasons which account for a reader's failure to comprehend a text. The first reason is that the reader may not have an appropriate schemata or one that is shared by the author. When this is the case comprehension cannot take place. The second reason is that the reader may have the appropriate schemata, but the author may not have provided enough clues. When this happens the reader may not initially comprehend the text without additional information. The third reason Rumelhart gives is that the reader may find a consistent interpretation of the text but not the one intended by the author. This is a case of understanding the text but not the intended message of the author.

When reading is viewed from a schema-theoretic perspective, it can be seen as a process of hypothesis testing, where the hypotheses are the schemata already stored in the memories of the readers and includes all the prior knowledge the readers bring to the text. (Devine, 1986).

Most discussion of schema theory emphasizes the use of schemata to assimilate information. However a person may modify a schema when given new information. A logical person will check to make sure new information is consistent with the information already stored in memory, and if it is not, will either reject the new information or modify the old. The person will also evaluate whether the source of new information is credible or the evidence is persuasive before changing the schema. Lipson (1983) has evidence that suggests that even young readers will reject text information if it is inconsistent with an already possessed interpretation that they believe to be correct.

Rumelhart (1980) views schema theory likeness to hypothesis testing. The reader is constantly evaluating the interpretation. A reader understands if a schema is found which offers a coherent account of the text. The schema is used to make inferences, and all aspects of a situation are not needed in order to assume that schema offers a satisfactory interpretation. The process of how the learner deals with experiences which cause a change in schema is still not fully understood, and is constantly being researched. It is known that people make inductive generalizations based on specific features or patterns of particular experiences, but it is not known how people can make these inferential discoveries so quickly, or how they select the features to attend to without filling their heads with data that is inaccurate or far-fetched.

Inferencing is one of the key processes that takes place during the comprehension process according to schema theorists. Inferencing can occur either at the time of initial coding of text information into memory or at the time that information is retrieved from memory.

Inferences may also be involved in the process of deciding what schema among many should be called into play in order to comprehend a text. Subtle clues are picked up from the text that allow the reader to select what schema to use.

Inference is also involved in the process of instantiating slots within a selected schema. A reader makes an inference when deciding a particular character or item mentioned in the text is intended to fill a particular slot or place in the schema created by the text. A reader may also fill a particular slot by a process of elimination of information referred to by schema theorists as assigning a "default value". The reader fills a slot in the schema with specific information because of the absence of any specific information in the text. Another type of inference made that is similar to the "default value" inference involves drawing a conclusion based upon lack of knowledge. It is based on the logic that if x is true I would know it were true. Since I do not know x to be true it must be false.

The first type of inference research involving schema-selection has been done by R. C. Anderson, Reynolds, Schallert and Goetz (1977). They presented two college students with two texts that suggested two different interpretations. The students chose a particular interpretation based on their own personal specialization. The study suggests that schema selection is often based on inference. The schema one selects influences the amount and nature of recall and once a schema has been selected it will dictate what other inferences will be made.

Evidence for the second kind of inference using a schema already selected to guide interpretation of a text was provided by Dooling and

Lachman (1971) and Bransford and Johnson (1972). Subjects in these studies were given passages that were written in a very vague style so that they were difficult to remember. Some students were given the title before they read the passage, some after and others not given it at all. The subjects who were given the title remembered more than those who received it after reading or not at all.

The third type of inference research on using a schema to fill important slots by assigning a default value, has been done by Paris and Lindauer (1976) and Paris and Upton (1976). They found that young children do not have the ability to draw inferences spontaneously. Five year olds were less able to infer the implied shovel in the sentence "the man dug the hole," than were eight year olds. However, when five year olds were told to act out the action in the sentence as they heard it they were just as able as the eight year olds to infer the instrument used was a shovel. Omanson, Warren and Trabasso (1978), concluded that it was available prior knowledge, not differences in memory capacity or control mechanisms, that accounted for differences in the quality of inference drawn by eight versus five year olds. Pearson, Hansen and Gordon (1979) found that differences in prior knowledge of the topic accounted for large differences in children's ability to answer inferential questions, but only for very modest differences in literal questions (R. C. Anderson & Pearson, 1984).

Nicholson and Imlach (1981) found that when children were given tasks about familiar topics they often used prior knowledge to answer inference questions even though the text provided explicit information that could be used.

Goetz (1979) studied how subjects made inferences during comprehension. He found that information that had been identified prior to reading as being essential to understanding, was usually identified during reading, and recalled.

The fourth type of inference research, the lack-of-knowledge inference, has had very few studies done in this area. What research has been done though seems to indicate these types of inferences are made at retrieval point from memory unlike "default value" inference which are made during the ongoing comprehension process.

Another area of prior knowledge research focuses on how the reader selects and focuses attention.

One index that has been used in this experimental research is the amount of time a subject takes to complete a task. Other measures which have been used to reflect aspects of attention include eye fixations, pupil dilation, brain waves, and latency of response to a second task probe.

Rothkopf and Billington (1979) completed three experiments in which high school students memorized simple learning objectives before studying a 1481 word passage. It was found that students who read the objectives before reading the passage spent more time on sentences relevant to these objectives and less time on ones not relevant to objectives than did students who read without objectives.

Questions inserted in a text have been hypothesized to cause readers to pay more attention to information that pertained to the question. Reynolds, Standiford and R. C. Anderson (1979) found that readers who answered questions spent more time on the parts of the text that contained information from the category needed to answer the questions. Performance on a later test showed that questioned groups learned and remembered more question-relevant information than the non-questioned groups.

Studies by Britton, Piha, Davis and Wehausen (1978) and Reynolds, Standiford and R. C. Anderson (1982) have used the length of time before a secondary task is performed as a measure of amount of time being devoted to reading. The results showed that readers took longer to respond to a sound probe when studying a segment that contained question-related material than when studying one that did not. Reading times were also longer on question-relevant segments. The amount of time a subject attends to a particular aspect of an assigned task has been referred to as selective attention. Theories have been developed which have been termed "selective attention hypothesis" which explain the reasons for the selective attention.

The selective attention hypothesis provides a convincing interpretation of the effects of providing readers with reading objectives or occasionally asking questions, but it does not clearly explain why subjects actually choose to attend to some aspects of a text rather than others. This is particularly true in the situation where the reader encounters a reading situation such as that presented by a mystery story. The reader in this situation has to attend to two situations at once, the clues and the chronology of events. The question that can be asked is whether extra attention will be directed to processing the important information provided by the clues? The selective attention hypothesis says that a Who-Done-It schema is furnished that provides ideational scaffolding for the information in the text (Ausubel, 1963; R. C. Anderson, Spiro & M. C. Anderson, 1978).

Goetz, Schallert, Reynolds and Radin (1983) examined the effects of the reader's perspective on the allocation of attention. The research confirmed previous research that the reader's perspective strongly influences which information will be recalled from the story (R. C. Anderson & Pichert, 1978; Grabe 1979; Pichert & R. C. Anderson, 1977).

Goetz, et al (1983) found that subjects spent more time on sentences that contained information that had been given to them through instructions before reading the text. They also spent somewhat more time on sentences that pertained to their personal backgrounds. Reynolds, (1981) and R.C. Anderson (1982) have summarized research consistent with these findings. Other research on selective attention hypothesis has been done by Cirilo and Foss (1980), Britton, Meyer, Simpson, Holdredge and Curry (1979), Alessi, T. H. Anderson and Goetz (1979), Shiffrin and Schneider (1977), Baddeley (1978), Nelson, (1977), Craik and Lockhart (1972), T. H. Anderson (1979), LaBerge and Samuels (1974), Posner (1978), Graesser, Hoffman and Clark (1980), Just and Carpenter (1980), Steffensen, Joag-dev and R. C. Anderson (1979). A comprehensive summary of their work can be found in R. C. Anderson and Pearson (1984).

The general findings of this research indicates that subjects spent more time reading sentences that contained information important in the light of the schema activated by perspective as well as sentences that were important because of their background knowledge. However, there were inconsistencies in the research because there were different definitions of what makes a text element "important". It appears more research on what makes a text element important to the reader is necessary.

SCHEMATA AND REMEMBERING

The prior knowledge that readers bring to a text affects their comprehension of it. This knowledge is stored in memory. Research indicates that these memories or schemata that comprise prior knowledge are stored in several forms. The reader possesses long term memories which are stored indefinitely. In addition there are available schemata which are not always accessible but remain stored and can be retrieved. These memories or schemata are stored systematically and new information is related to information already present so that organized information networks are established. These systematic networks are categorized according to relationships so that new information will have meaning in terms of the way it relates or fails to relate to other items. Often these are summaries of past experiences. For example if a person performs an action such as sharpening a pencil, he may not remember when or where it was sharpened but knows a pencil is something that can be sharpened. The reader may also store reconstructions from information that was retrieved from memory and altered in some way by a different perspective and then stored again in memory in its altered state. Many of the memories or schemata stored are semantic and episodic, meaning that some memories are very personal and meaningful only for the individual, while others reflect a common understanding shared by most other people (Devine, 1986).

Pichert and R. C. Anderson (1977) have obtained evidence which suggests that a person's schema has an affect on memory in addition to an affect on learning. In their study, reader's schemata were manipulated by assigning different perspectives. It was found that the importance of the information to the assigned perspective had an influence on learning. Other research in perspective has been done by Anderson and Pichert (1978), R. C. Anderson, Pichert and Shirey (1983), Fass and Schumacker and (1981), Flammer and Tauber (1982).

R. C. Anderson (1978) has outlined three possible hypotheses to answer the question of how a person's schema influences memory. These have been labeled retrieval plan hypothesis, output-editing hypothesis and reconstruction hypothesis.

According to the retrieval plan hypothesis the schema provides the framework for a "top-down search of memory" (Bobrow & Norman, 1975). The search for a schema proceeds from the general concepts incorporated in the schema to the particular information related to these concepts that was learned while the passage was being read. A top-down schema-guided search provides access to information important in light of the schema, but it cannot turn up information unrelated to the schema (R. C. Anderson & Pearson, 1984; R. C. Anderson & Pichert, 1978; Grabe 1979).

In the "output editing" hypothesis the schema provides the basis for output editing. Output editing is the selection or rejection of information to report when recalling a passage. The hypothesis says that "criteria for this decision favour the currently operative schema" (R. C. Anderson & Pearson, 1984). Studies examining the hypothesis have been done by Surber (1977) and R. C. Anderson and Pichert (1978).

According to the reconstruction hypothesis the person generates inferences about what must have been in the passage based on the person's schema and aspects of the passage that can be recalled.

Research in this area has been done by Loftus and Palmer (1974), Spiro (1977, 1980) and Snyder and Uranowitz (1978).

Research on the relation between levels of prior knowledge and the organization of recall has been done by Langer (1980, 1981). She suggests that the levels of prior knowledge used by students in her study were highly correlated with the reader's organization of recall, and that the prior knowledge categories she defined might be used as predictors of recall success before assigning reading in the classroom. She believes that text specific concepts and vocabulary knowledge affect the processing and recall of text. A measure of specific text related knowledge might assist teachers in determining, whether a reader possesses adequate background knowledge to comprehend and recall from the text and whether additional concept instruction is necessary, before the text is assigned.

For a more extensive and comprehensive literature review on schema theory and prior knowledge refer to Neyrink (1986) and her comparative study of Good and Poor Sixth Grade Reader's Concepts of Reading, Conceptual Prior Knowledge, and Reading Comprehension of Narrative and Expository Text. Her literature review summarizes research on schema theory in relation to the reader, the text and the reading process. She also summarizes reseach done on prior knowledge needed for successful author-reader communication concerning contextual knowledge, knowledge of language, knowledge of text and knowledge of social interactions and intentionality. Prior knowledge research in the area of procedural knowledge includes studies of knowledge of reading task and metacognition and a review of literature on children's concepts of reading. In the area of prior knowledge and comprehension of prose

Neyrink has included assessment of prior knowledge studies concerned with use of prior knowledge by readers of varying abilities and studies involving the provision of prior knowledge. A section of the literature review also includes research on prior knowledge, inferential thought and comprehension of prose as well as research on inferential thought, metacognition, knowledge of reading and comprehension of prose.

Neyrink concludes that use of conceptual prior knowledge to infer meaning from the text seemed more dependent on the quantity of available conceptual prior knowledge than verbalized awareness of the importance of prior knowledge as a concept of reading attribute. The quality of conceptual prior knowledge appeared to enhance a link between the reader's concept of reading which showed the importance of prior knowledge and the use of conceptual prior knowledge to comprehend text.

RELATING AN EXPERIENCE TO WHAT ONE ALREADY KNOWS

> ...there is a private theory in the head of all of us, a theory of what this world is like and how it is organized. This theory, which I have called cognitive structure, is every individual's attempt to summarize what he knows about the world. Without such a theory our past would be incoherent, our present incomprehensible and our future a barrage of surprises (Smith, 1975, p. 243).

In order to understand and make sense of the objects and events that surround them, individuals develop a system of categories or "schemata." Past experiences are what the individual draws from in order to categorize the objects and events. Making sense requires placing objects and events into categories based on distinctive features and relating these categories in meaningful ways. Making sense also requires not only the relegating of objects and events into categories based on distinctive features but the relating of categories in meaningful ways for a "world representation to develop." (Britton, 1970, p. 15).

Smith (1975) suggests that each individual develops a system of categories in order to make sense of the objects and events he perceives. Experience is the base for the development of categories, but an individual decides whether to treat one object or event differently from another. According to Smith the individual selects only relevant information from existing cognitive structures in attempting to make sense of, or comprehend a particular situation.

> We use what we know about the world in order to make sense of it, not blindly, but by seeking information that will answer specific questions. The true art of making sense of the world lies in knowing what can be safely ignored (Smith 1975, p. 35).

Britton (1970) provides a theory of how we relate experience to what is already known. He believes

> that we construct a representation of the world as we experience it and from this representation this cumulative record of our own past, we generate expectations concerning the future; expectations which, as moment by moment the future becomes the present, enable us to interpret the present....we habitually create representations of one kind or another of the things we meet in the actual world in order to use them in making sense of fresh encounters (p. 12).

Forming a hypothesis or prediction about the way things are and putting them to the test of what actually happens is also the theory of human behaviour put forth by psychologist George Kelly. He says "man looks at his world through transparent patterns or templates which he creates and then attempts to fit over the realities of which the world is composed" (Kelly, 1963, p. 8). He believes that man constructs or places a construction upon experience and that experience is made up of the successive construing of events. The construction one places upon events are working hypotheses which are about to be put to the test of experience. As one's anticipations or hypotheses are successfully revised in the light of the unfolding sequence of events, a construction system undergoes a progressive evolution (p. 72).

Language enables individuals to communicate and share developing concepts. M.A.K. Halliday (1969) in his research in language development demonstrates how language is internalized as a result of experience.

> The determining elements in the young child's experience are the successful demands on language that he himself has made, and the particular needs that have been satisfied by language for him. He has used language in many ways - for the satisfaction of material and intellectual needs, for the mediation of personal relationships and the expression of feelings and so on. Language in all these uses has come within his own direct experience and because of this he is subconciously aware that language has many functions that affect him personally (Halliday, 1969, p. 27).

Halliday stresses the importance of the child's experiences with the functions of language as a means of gaining meaning. It is the internalization of the functions of language that enable the child to gain success with new experiences in language. "The child knows what language is because he knows what language does." (p. 27).

The ability to use language to organize an individual's personal view of the world is an important part of cognitive development. In discussing concept development and language in regards to children, Clark, H. & Clark, E. V. (1977), stated:

> Concept development and language are integral parts of the child's overall cognitive development. Cognitive development is the way children organize their world: how they use experiences, language and thinking to make sense of their world. As children develop, they constantly have the task of perceiving information from the environment, organizing and storing this information, and applying this information to new situations. To make sense of the overwhelming amount of information available in the environment the child must actively organize and store information by inferring relationships. The child uses categorization to organize these relationships or concepts; as a result, the child expands and refines concepts and forms new concepts (p. 47).

Piaget (1951) in explaining the nature of the learning process in children, talks about children's early experiences with the world as a base for the development of cognitive structures. This early accumulation of information forms the base for the growth of additional cognitive structures, one of which is language.

Piaget stresses the relationships between the action of the child on the environment (assimilation) and the action of the environment on the child (accommodation). Children must incorporate the new information into their existing cognitive structure or adjust the cognitive structure to fit the new information from the environment. Children thus continually and actively structure their own learning as they interact with the environment.

Vygotsky (1978) views individual mental processes as reflecting the social situation from which they were developed. Any change in the social functioning will result in changes to the individual's psychological functions. To understand an individual's cognitive growth it is important to understand the social interaction in which the individual participates.

Vygotsky has developed the notion of "the zone of proximal development",

> the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaborations with more capable peers." (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86).

According to Vygotsky learning and development are interrelated. What children can do with the assistance of others might in some sense be more indicative of their mental development than what they can do alone.

Studies by Bruner and his colleagues (Bruner, 1978; Ninio & Bruner, 1978; Bruner & Ratner, 1978; Wood, Bruner & Ross, 1976) recognized the importance of Vygotsky's work on how learning and development are interrelated. They viewed the interactions between the child and others as being critical. They have used the term "scaffolding" to describe what children can accomplish with the help of others. Scaffolding consists of providing help with elements that are beyond the children's capabilities, while encouraging them to complete those elements which are within their range of competence. This not only helps the children to accomplish the task at hand but also shows them new strategies that will eventually allow similar tasks to be completed without the help (Applebee and Langer, 1986, p. 178).

IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING

The research on prior knowledge acquisition and reading comprehension possesses has some basic implications for classroom practices.

First, many readers are likely to have gaps in knowledge and because what a person knows is a principal determination of what can be comprehended, the less one knows the less can be comprehended.

Second, many readers are likely to lack understanding of the relationships among the facts they know about a topic. Information that is not linked to the knowledge they already possess may cause confusion, slow learning, slow processing and an inability to reason satisfactorily because the reader cannot assimilate the new information they are processing to anything they already know.

Third, many readers are unlikely to make the inference required to make connections between information given in a text into a coherent overall representation. Many readers do not seem to realize that comprehending a story or text requires the use of all the information fitted together so that the completed interpretation makes sense. In order to form a coherent representation the reader must draw precise, integrating inference which is something poor readers have difficulty doing (Bransford, Stein, Nye, Franks, Auble, Merynski & Perfetto, 1982).

To help students become good readers teachers must provide curricula rich with concepts from the students' everyday world and topics they are interested in. The students require books and instruction that answers the how and why things function as they do. Most importantly, becoming a good reader depends upon teachers helping students make interconnections among ideas they are learning (R. C. Anderson & Pearson, 1984).

Recent research indicates that researchers are recognizing the importance of intervention to aid development of prior knowledge or the accessing of existing knowledge.

Beck, Omanson and McKeown (1982) and Beck, McKeon, McCaslin and Burkes (1979) stress that it is an important concern of psychological research to show how external knowledge and abilities in children become internalized.

Reutzel (1984, 1985), Langer (1981, 1984, 1985), Osborn, Jones and Stein (1985) and Prince and Mancus (1987) recommend a restructuring of the traditional basal reading programs to make them consistent with the findings from research on schema theory.

They suggest more time needs to be spent accessing and building students background knowledge before learning tasks are assigned. They believe teachers need to do more scaffolding between the childrens prior knowledge and the texts they are being assigned to read.

Stauffer (1969) has developed the Directed Reading Thinking Activity as an example of pre-reading techniques which assist the reader in activating prior knowledge or schema.

The instructional technique he suggests is for the students to first predict what they will read and then check their predictions through subsequent reading. Students are helped to actively find the information they need from the material they read. The teacher's role is one of a director, asking questions that will guide the students to find their own answers.

R. C. Anderson (1985), Devine (1986) and Farr and Roser (1979) recommended that teachers use direct intervention in the assimilation-accommodation process. To do this they must help students build their background knowledge or help them make connections between what they know and the learning task.

Goodman and Watson (1977) suggest that reading programs must relate to what the students already know. "What the student is reading must relate to some degree to what the student already knows. The depth of the reader's knowledge and the extent to which the reader relates prior information to the author's message as well as versatility with reading strategies, determines the depth and extent of the readers comprehension" (p. 868).

Raphael and Pearson (1985) have done research that explores how well students can answer comprehension promoting or assessment oriented questions. They found that text explicit question-answer relationships require an awareness of the interplay between the readers' own knowledge base and how to use that knowledge to integrate text information appropriately. They also found that instruction that helped students use effective reading strategies had the most effect on students with lower reading ability. These findings were consistent with research done by Hansen and Pearson (1983) and Au (1979) that suggests that students of lower ability need specific instruction in how to use background knowledge and that the teacher often needs to provide the instruction before they read the text.

Durkin (1978-1979), Duffy and McIntrye (1980), Duffy and Rochler (1982), Duncan and Biddle (1974), Mehan (1979), Barr (1973-1974, 1975), Clark and Yinger (1980) and Peterson, Marx and Clark (1978) have reached similar conclusions that students need specific instruction in how to use background knowledge but unfortunately because most curricula in teaching is dominated by the belief that coverage of content somehow constitutes learning, very little instruction is given in this area.

Collins (1982), Cook-Gumperz, Gumperz and Simons (1982), Erickson (1977), Erickson and Shultz (1981), Green and Wallat (1981) and McDermott (1977) have conducted ethnographic studies that indicate "that the classroom is in itself a sociocultural context where communication is deeply intertwined with learning." (Langer 1984, p. 114). This research suggests that coverage needs to be considered in terms of how the students engage in activities as well as their scope and frequency. There is the suggestion that literacy instruction needs to account for the differing language and world views that the students and teachers bring to school and to each other. "The communicative aspect of the learning environment plays an important role in the instructional enterprise" (p. 114).

Applebee and Langer (1983, 1984, 1986) have begun to develop an alternate view of effective instruction. Their concern is with the context of the classroom. Their work reflects their criticism of what they have found in schools. They have used the model of instructional scaffolding as a way to examine the nature of instructional interaction. Applebee and Langer have identified five characteristics of instructional interaction that they see as critical to the success of activities in the classroom:

1. Student ownership of the learning event - The instructional task

must permit the students to make their own contribution to the activity as it evolves which allows the students to have a sense of ownership for their work;

2. Appropriateness of the instructional task - The instructional task must be part of the knowledge and skills the students already have, yet pose problems that cannot be solved without further help. The task needs to be sufficiently difficult to permit new learning to take place but not be so difficult that it inhibits new learning;
3. Supportive instruction - Once the teacher and student understand that help is necessary, direct instruction in the form of questioning, modelling or constructive dialogue is given to help the student achieve success with the task. The student thus learns new skills during the process of doing the task in a context where instruction provides the scaffolding or support necessary to make the task possible;
4. Shared responsibility - The teacher's role must be more collaborative than evaluative. It is the role of facilitator of learning, helping students towards new learning rather than testing previously learned concepts. The teachers response to student work helps the students rethink their efforts and rework their own ideas before they move towards more effective solutions to problems;
5. Internalization - Instruction should change in response to the students internalization of the patterns and approaches practiced with the teachers' assistance. Instruction needs to be sensitive to the fact that as students gain new knowledge and skills, the instructional interaction should change as well.

The important feature of instructional scaffolding is that the teacher is directly involved in providing instructional support but the thinking and learning belong to the student.

Devine (1986) suggests that expanding students prior knowledge should be the primary concern of teachers because the quantity and quality of reader's prior knowledge is the primary influence in comprehension. He recognizes however that:

> Individual teachers clearly cannot in one or several classes develop and refine the infinite number of schemata that contribute to students' prior knowledge. Some students, because of the richness of their personal experiences or depth and breadth of their recreational reading, approach each reading assignment with a wealth of world knowledge. Others, without vicarious real life experiences are handicapped comprehenders from the start. (p. 91)

He suggests that teachers can refine, enrich, extend and enlarge prior knowledge held schematically in long term memory through the processes of accretion, tuning and reconstruction.

During the accretion process according to Devine, each time a teacher teaches something, talks about it or even refers to it in class, traces of what is being mentioned will remain in the students memory. These appear to be fragments of a schema and the more often a teacher discusses or mentions something being taught, the student may develop a full schema of the topic.

With the tuning process as the student encounters a term in many classroom contexts it is reshaped and modified until the term works for that student in a variety of ways. More encounters with the term in various contexts helps to tune the concept so it can be used in a variety of ways.

The reconstruction process is hardest for teachers to implement in the classroom setting because it involves restructuring the students schema. Students must build a new schema from the ground up. It includes analogy making so that a new schema is formed. The reason this is so difficult to teach is that existing schema get in the way. In order to help students develop new schema without interference from existing schema, Devine suggests teachers build upon what students already know, provide background information orally, show students what to read, provide real-life experiences, encourage wide reading for vicarious experience and restructure and build new schemata.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

THE ETHNOGRAPHIC APPROACH

This study is descriptive and exploratory in nature. An ethnographic approach was taken in order to describe the context in which language arts activities were taking place and the meaning the activities had for the participants. The ethnographic approach to research assumes

> ...that people's behaviour can only be understood in context. For this reason 'natural' settings must be investigated: we cannot understand the social world by studying artificial simulations of it in experiments or interviews. To restrict the investigation of social behaviour to such settings is to discover only how people behave in experimental and interview situations. (Hammersly and Atkinson 1983, p. 9).

According to Schutz (1962) when examining the social world we are studying not only facts, events, and data that we actually can observe as we do in studying the natural (physical) world; but we are examining events and data which have been selected and interpreted by our informants. Schutz argues that the social scientist's task is the reconstruction of the way in which people in their daily lives interpret the world.

He sees the main problem of the social scientist as being the development of a method in order to deal in an objective way with the subjective meaning of human action.

How we define, select and interpret facts which are part of the assumptions people make about the way the world operates is what Schutz calls common sense thinking or taken for granted meaning. It is this taken for granted meaning which allows us to function in everyday life. Schutz also believes that people function in the world by basing their actions and interpretations of the world on their stock of knowledge, which is grounded in their own personal experience as well as the experiences of their predecessors which have been handed down to them.

It is the researcher's job to observe the informant's action and behaviours as well as talk to the informants in order to understand their stock of knowledge which determines those behaviours. Schutz believes that people's actions in any social situation are meaningful in terms of their motives which he defines as being of two different kinds: "in-order-to" motives which are based on the knowledge at hand and are decided before the fact, and the "because" motives which are based on knowledge after the fact and are the motives that explain what determined them to do what they did. Schutz argues that as an observer we cannot know the total context of any action but only the small portion being observed, and if the observer does not share the stock of knowledge which is taken for granted by the insiders, the action may be viewed as non-rational. It is therefore important for the observer to see the action from the point of view of the insider to determine the actors' "in-order to" and "because" motives so that the event will be seen as meaningful within the larger context.

In addition, Schutz claims that an actor cannot have knowledge of his actions while performing them, because as soon as he thinks about his actions the present becomes the past and the action is completed. The observer can describe the action, and in using his knowledge of typically similar patterns of interaction, in typically similar settings, can construct the motives of the actors from what is observed. In being able to think and see the actors actions the observer is able to describe the action, present it to the actors for verification and in doing so make explicit what is tacit understanding for the actors.

It is important therefore for the observer to be both a participant and an observer. In doing this according to Spradley (1980) the observer is able to make himself explicitly aware of what others take for granted. "In observing people's behaviour we derive hypotheses from our cultural knowledge to describe and explain their actions, and we test those out against further information" (Hammersly and Atkinson 1983, p. 16).

Hammersly and Atkinson also argue that to find out whether the description we apply to a situation is appropriate "we have to investigate the context in which the action occurs; that is, we have to generate possible meanings from the culture for surrounding or other apparently relevant actions"(p. 16).

As an inside and an outside observer we are able to participate in the social world and are still able in anticipation and retrospect to observe our activities from the outside as objects in the world.

In order to understand another's actions according to Schutz (1962) the observer must enter into what he calls a consociate relationship. A consociate relationship allows each person participating in the relationship and sharing common sense experiences to best understand the actions of the other.

GAINING ENTRY

The proposed design of the study necessitated a classroom environment where students were able to share their personal experience or background knowledge. At the same time they would be able to gain new knowledge or learning experiences that could enable them to build on what they have brought with them to the learning situation. In June, 1988 I approached the grade six teacher at the school where I was teaching. I previously had the opportunity to observe his classroom environment and we discussed his program philosophy on an ongoing basis throughout the year. I felt that the language arts program in this classroom would be appropriate for the purposes of my research. From the discussions we had and the observations I had made of his program he appeared to be doing many different and interesting language, arts activities. The students were enjoying being in his class and were excited about his language arts program. I had the impression the students were involved in their learning and I felt this type of involvement was important for the type of study I was carrying out. The teacher and I discussed my proposed study and I explained that I wished to be an observer in the classroom for a period of about four months. During this time I wished to have formal contact with four jointly selected informants, as well as informal contact with the other students in the class. My study would focus on the language arts program and assigned activities. I would observe the language arts periods and audio tape the lessons taking place. In addition I wished to share a dialogue journal with him in order to verify and expand on discussions we would be having.

Mr. Shelby agreed to allow me to conduct my study in his class because he was interested in my study and felt it would be challenging to have me share ideas with him. He did have some reservations however about the class that he would be getting in September, 1988, which was when I would be conducting my study.

This particular class had a reputation for discipline problems. He felt that I should be aware of this in case it would affect my research. In September, 1988, formal permission was granted by the principal and superintendent to complete the research in Mr. Shelby's classroom. As my research was scheduled to commence early in September Mr. Shelby requested that he be given more time to get to know the class and establish routines and discipline. We agreed that I would contact him later in September and we would agree on a date when I would enter the classroom. I contacted Mr. Shelby a week after school had started to see if he was still willing to allow me to do my research in the classroom. He was still willing but informed me that this group of students was indeed going to be a challenge to teach, and an aide had been hired to assist him with discipline problems in the classroom. He requested more time to work with the students before I came into the classroom. We agreed on the second week in October as a starting date, and in the meantime I would draft a letter requesting permission from the parents for the students to be involved in the research project. This would be ready to be sent home with the students when I actually commenced my classroom visits.

My previous experience as a teacher in this school proved to be a challenge for my role as a researcher. As Hammersly and Atkinson state (1983, p. 92) "another problem with settings in one's own society is that one may not be allowed to take on a novice role." Mr. Shelby had respect for my ability as a language arts teacher and had difficulty accepting me in the novice role of researcher. Through extensive questioning about his language arts program I was able to convince him that although I had experience as a teacher I was a novice in his classroom setting and in my role as researcher. Once he accepted my novice role he provided more in-depth explanations of the events that were taking place in the classroom. He no longer assumed that we shared the same common experience.

We discussed my role as a passive observer and agreed that I would avoid any responsibility for the teacher role in regards to discipline. Mr. Shelby was comfortable with my request that unless there was a situation that might be dangerous for the students I would not assume any responsibility related to a teacher role in the classroom.

ESTABLISHING RAPPORT

Establishing my relationship with the teacher was easy because we knew each other from being colleagues the previous year. He was enthusiastic about my research and very willing to cooperate in any way to help make my study successful. He admitted that he did not fully understand what I was doing in detail but understood the general area I was studying. He felt my research would possibly help him with his teaching and program planning. He also felt he could learn from the experience of having me in his classroom. The opportunity would challenge him to be a better teacher.

Many of the students remembered me as a teacher at the school the previous year. I had taught some of their younger brothers or sisters in grade one. I realized that there was confusion on their part as to what my role would actually be because of some of the questions that were asked. They wanted to know whether or not I would be teaching them and were surprised when I told them I would only be watching them. I hoped that the confusion would be cleared up once the students became used to observing me in my role as an observer. As Hammersly and Atkinson (1983, p. 56) state, "Access is not simply a matter of physical presence or absence. It is far more than the granting or withholding of permission for research to be conducted." Although I had gained access to the classroom easily because of my relationship with Mr. Shelby as a colleague in the same school, it took several weeks of observation before the teacher, students and myself as researcher were able to relax in our roles and be comfortable interacting in those roles. As a former teacher I had difficulty feeling comfortable in my role as observer. This was mainly due to the fact that I was aware that I was making Mr. Shelby uncomfortable having me in his classroom as an observer. For the first few class visits he would come and apologize to me if he had to discipline the class or he felt the class wasn't behaving in a manner he felt was acceptable. After the second week of observation though Mr. Shelby became used to having me in the class and I would be drawn into class discussions and playful bantering that went on regularly in the room.

I was given free access to the students at any time should I wish to talk to them or move around the classroom to observe their work. Having an aide in the room who frequently did this made it easier for me also to be mobile in the room if I wished. After the first month the students seemed to take my presence for granted and came to accept my being at the back of the room taking notes. I sat at a table where the aide also sat because they were used to her writing and working there. They seemed to assume that my work was the same as hers and was also acceptable. Very few students even bothered to ask what I was writing after my first week of visits. They also became very used to the tape recorder being on in the room when I was there. They would only seem to take notice if Mr. Shelby made reference to it. This he sometimes did in a joking manner such as stating that I was sending information to the school board and he would lose his job, or that they had better put on a good performance because I was recording what they were doing. After the first week of recording, some students would sometimes ask if I was recording but seemed not to be really interested in the answer, as there was no visible change in their behaviour if I said yes or no. The usual response was "oh" and they carried on with what they were doing.

A passive observer role on initial entry to the classroom allowed me to be present at the scene of action but not participate or interact in the class activities. As the students adjusted to my new role I found myself being engaged more frequently in conversations with the students in the halls and as they came in or left the room for recess breaks. Students who sat close to me while Mr. Shelby was teaching would also frequently try to engage me in conversation to explain something or have a discussion about the lesson. Gradually, as it became apparent that I would not reprimand them nor inform Mr. Shelby about their behaviour, students began to share books or activities they were working on voluntarily. My role of passive observer had gradually changed to that of more moderate participant.

At this time Mr. Shelby and I had decided on which students would be my four informants and I had begun to conduct unstructured interviews with them. The other students were curious about what I was doing with the student informers because we would leave the room for our interviews. Some of the other students asked if they could also come and talk to me about their work. When the opportunities arose that I could interview other students I did so. I felt this would provide additional data and help me to gain rapport with the other students in the class.

As the study evolved so did my role as researcher. Hammersly and Atkinson, 1983 (p. 93) describe this change by stating "The acceptable incompetent is not, then the only role that ethnographers may take on in the field, and indeed where it is adopted it is often abandoned to one degree or another, as the fieldwork progresses."

SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

Throughout the study, observational data was collected by observing and audio taping the class as a whole. However, to gain a better understanding of what Schutz (1962) refers to as the students "stock of knowledge" and their "in order to" and "because" motives, it was necessary to study a few key informants in-depth.

Initially, when discussing the selection with Mr. Shelby, I had asked him to identify four students who would cover the range of above average, average and below average ability in language arts. He had difficulty selecting students who would meet this criteria and not be behaviour problems. He also suggested that students who were articulate and cooperative might be better informants for the study. I agreed with him and chose two boys and two girls from those he suggested. One of the boys and one of the girls were also chosen for their cultural background as I felt they might contribute diversity of background knowledge to the study.

These informants were selected in October, which was early in the school year for Mr. Shelby to be able to evaluate the students' ability. Subsequent testing revealed that one of the students was considered gifted, two were above average ability and one was of average ability.

Written permission was gained from the parents and the students were aware that they could withdraw from the study at any time if they wished. All four informants were pleased to be selected for the study and were willing to spend the extra time discussing their work with me. Other students from the class also wanted to be part of the selected group. Mr. Shelby said this was because the others believed I had chosen the four informants because they were "brains" and wanted to be part of this group. I didn't know how to respond to this. In order not to establish an "in" and an "out" group, I would occasionally select other students as informants. This also provided the opportunity to gain closer relationships with other students in the class.

RESEARCH SCHEDULE

My initial visit to Mr. Shelby's class was on October 16, 1988. I observed in Mr. Shelby's room twice a week for the first two weeks and three times a week when possible in the remaining weeks until the end of November. At this time Mr. Shelby gained a student teacher.

The classroom routines and the continuity of Mr. Shelby's language arts program was interrupted to accommodate the student teacher. As Mr. Shelby's teaching was vital to the consistency of the study it was decided that I would take a break from the classroom observations until January, after the Christmas break, when the student teacher would have completed her teaching assignment. This would allow for further analysis of data already collected. Observation on returning to the field would be more focused as a result of more in-depth analysis.

For the first two weeks I observed the class as a whole and spoke informally with students when I knew I would not interfere with their work. I interviewed each of the four selected informants. These were unstructured interviews to get to know the children and have them get acquainted with the interviewing process and the fact that I would be taping them when we had our discussions.

I also interviewed Mr. Shelby formally and informally during these first three weeks. During the next three weeks I focused more on the four informants. I interviewed them formally, and informally and collected copies of any language arts activities that they were working on. I also continued to collect observational and tape-recorded data from the whole class. Data collection for the month of January proceeded in the same manner.

DATA COLLECTION

Mathesson (1988, p. 13) states that "good research practice obligates the researcher to triangulate, that is, to use multiple methods, data sources and researchers to enhance the validity of research findings." Miles and Huberman (1984, p. 235)) suggest ...triangulation is a state of mind. If you self-consciously set out to collect and double-check findings, using multiple sources and modes of evidence, the verification process will largely be built into the data gathering process, and little more need be done than to report on one's proceedings.'

Several types of data were gathered to enhance the validity of the data. Extensive field notes and tape recordings were taken of student's behaviour and comments in class during instructional time. Students and teacher were interviewed about the language arts program and the individual activities that were assigned as part of the program. A dialogue journal was kept with the teacher to clarify and expand on discussions or questions I had about the program.

FIELD NOTES

> Fieldnotes are the traditional means in ethnography for recording observational data. In accordance with ethnography's commitment to discovery, fieldnotes consist of relatively concrete descriptions of social processes and their contexts. The aim is to capture these in their integrity, noting their various features and properties, though clearly what is recorded will depend on some general sense of what is relevant to

> the forshadowed problems of research
> (Hammersly & Atkinson p. 145).

Spradley's (1980) model of recording was used, consisting of a condensed account, an expanded account, a field journal, an analysis and interpretation journal. Condensed accounts were recorded during language arts classes when Mr. Shelby was instructing and also when the students were completing activities assigned for the class. The students accepted my note taking easily and seemed to see it as a natural thing for me to do since the classroom aide also was frequently engaged in some writing activity during this time. The students were also accustomed to writing and passing notes to each other as this was a means of communication that was encouraged by Mr. Shelby and one that he participated in.

There were times when it was impossible to take notes during the action such as when we were walking from the classroom to the staffroom and engaged in discussion, or during recess coffee break when comments relevant to the study were made. As soon as possible these comments were recorded. This usually was done upon returning to the classroom or immediately after leaving the classroom at lunch time, before leaving the school. An expanded account was written up from the condensed notes taken in the field setting. These were done as soon as time permitted after leaving the school. This involved filling in details and recalling details that may have been missed when recording the data on site.

In addition a field journal was kept where I recorded any emotional responses, experiences, reflections, fears and discussions I may have had with my advisor, friends and colleagues about my study. This has been a valuable resource enabling me to look back and review the processes that have been involved in the data collection and also to see how the study has evolved and developed.

I also had a section in my field journal for analysis and interpretation where I recorded insights and reflections that specifically related to the data. Questions were also recorded which came out of the data analysis and observations which I felt might be relevant at a later stage in my study.

In addition tape recordings were used to collect data. The students very quickly adjusted to having the tape recorder on during the language arts period. During the first two sessions they would ask if I was recording them but seemed to accept and even not notice when I was recording in subsequent classes. In fact after I had been recording for about a month, Mr. Shelby jokingly made reference to the fact that I had the tape recorder on and they should perform accordingly because I was sending evidence of his teaching ability to the superintendent and he might lose his job. The students looked in my direction with puzzled expressions and then some said "oh ya! we forgot". They had become so used to the tape recorder that they had forgotten it was there.

An important method of data collection that I used was a dialogue journal. In it Mr. Shelby and I corresponded when I needed to question, discuss, clarify or verify some aspect of the data that had been collected.

Although Mr. Shelby and I agreed to use the dialogue journal to communicate questions, concerns or discussions of any aspect of the research project, Mr. Shelby did not initiate any exchanges. He preferred to discuss or question orally and to use the journal to respond to my questions or discussions.

INTERVIEWS

Spradley (1980) states that there are two types of interviews: informal and formal. "An informal ethnographic interview occurs whenever you ask someone a question during the course of participant observation." (p. 123) "A formal interview usually occurs at an appointed time and results from a specific request to hold the interview." (p. 124) He also says that there are two important processes that work together for a successful interview: developing rapport and eliciting information. Rapport encourages informants to talk about their culture and eliciting information fosters the development of rapport.

Descriptive questions were asked during the formal and informal interviews that were conducted with the teacher and the students. The teacher and the student informants were interviewed formally on several occasions. Each interview was tape recorded and analyzed before the next interview with that informant.

DOCUMENTS

The students were expected to keep several different types of records as a requirement of the language arts program. I collected and made copies of these records. They provided data that I frequently analyzed and took back to my informants for discussion to gain greater insights about the prior knowledge they used to complete the activity. For example, they had to write a descriptive, "scary" paragraph at Halloween. I collected copies of my informant's writing and interviewed each of them to gain insights into their writing. I wanted to know why they included certain elements in their stories or wrote about the topics they chose. Through descriptive questioning about their stories, I was able to better understand their motives for the content of their writing.

COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Spradley (1980) indicates that people learn about their culture by making inferences and we use three types of information to make cultural inferences. We observe what people do, we observe things people make and use and we listen to what people say. He states that cultural knowledge is of fundamental importance and that it exists at two levels of consciousness: knowledge that is explicit and that we are aware of, and tacit, or knowledge that is outside our awareness.

Schutz (1962) describes how we are able to gain understanding of our everyday or "common sense" world by stating

> ...in the natural attitude of daily life we are concerned merely with certain objects standing out over and against the unquestioned field of pre-experienced other objects, and the result of the selecting activity of our mind is to determine which particular characteristics of such an object are individual and which are typical ones. More generally we are merely concerned with some aspects of this particular typified object (Schutz 1962, p. 9).

According to Spradley (1980) "Analysis of any kind involves a way of thinking. It refers to the systematic examination of something to determine its parts, the relationships among parts and their relationships to the whole. Analysis is a search for patterns." (p. 85).

Analysis of data for this study followed the Developmental Research Sequence suggested by Spradley (1980) asking ethnographic questions, collecting ethnographic data, making an ethnographic record, analyzing ethnographic data, back to asking ethnographic questions and so on. (p. 29).

All audiotaped recordings of classroom language arts lessons and interviews with the teacher and students were transcribed. These transcriptions and all observational fieldnotes were read and examined in order to identify themes and categories. Examples of students work were collected and also examined for themes and categories. Interviews were conducted with the students to clarify and verify assumptions made from fieldnotes and examinations of their work. Written correspondence with the teacher was examined to obtain an additional perspective on various aspects of the study. Ongoing informal interviews also were conducted with the teacher to verify any assumptions being made from the data analysis. The research data was examined with reference to the research questions on an ongoing basis.

To ensure validity and reliability of the study ninety hours of audiotaped transcriptions comprised the majority of the data. Selected transcripts and fieldnote data were discussed with the classroom teacher and advisor to verify any assumptions being made about the students work or about the language arts program. The classroom teacher was consulted throughout the study to clarify and verify the findings that were being made.

CHAPTER IV

THE TEACHER AND HIS PROGRAM

THE TEACHER

Mr. Shelby had a good rapport with his students. There was a lot of joking and teasing going on at all times in the room. "I'm having a good time with the kids", he stated. "I tease a lot and they like it and I like it." An atmosphere was created that seemed to indicate an attitude of mutual respect between the students and Mr. Shelby. He had explained to the students early in the year that he was acting 'in loco parenthis'in regards to their welfare. Two of the boys frequently referred to him as "Dad".

Mr. Shelby's approach to teaching was very structured. He selected the materials, assigned the learning activities and directed the teaching. He was a very organized person. He kept ordered lesson plans in two large binders that he referred to daily. These plans had been developed over his years of teaching grade six and he used these plans with some modifications from year to year.

When I used these records I found each area of the language arts program identified and daily lesson plans inserted in order. His record keeping of the students' work for evaluation purposes was also kept up to date. Mr. Shelby's expectations in regards to classroom behaviour and student's responsibilities for assigned work were clearly explained to the students and he consistently followed the rules he had laid out.

He would collect students' work and knew which students' work was not handed in. Students who did not complete their work or did not keep their notebooks in order were warned and sometimes field trip privileges were denied.

Mr. Shelby explained what he did with students who didn't have their work done. "Well, we put their names on the board and we choose one of them to clean up for the day and they usually will do the work before they go home in their spare time." Being chosen "slave for the day" did not seem to be a major embarrassment for the students. They usually just accepted the job and as there were usually other students who stayed behind at recess, lunch hour or after school to chat, would join in the conversation as they cleaned up. Some students took this opportunity to talk with Mr. Shelby without interruptions. A friendly attitude was maintained while the job was being done.

Mr. Shelby had an enthusiasm for learning that he wished to pass on to his students. It was evident from observing him teach that the depth of his general knowledge, particularly in the areas of history and etymology, was extensive. His peers regarded him as someone who was knowledgeable and somewhat of a philosopher.

Mr. Shelby had a strong commitment to his teaching. He was often at school an hour or two before school started. He would remain after school to prepare lessons or play games with the students in the gym. He produced a school operetta each year and was taking a group of students to Greece on an educational tour. He was an avid reader, musically talented, and a skilled drama teacher. These three areas of interest were reflected in his teaching.

Mr. Shelby had a very gentle way of disciplining the students. Although there was continuous teasing going on in the class, they recognized when he meant business.

Mr. S. When I walk in there I become one of the kids.

Int: But you have such a good rapport with the kids and your discipline,I'm amazed. When you said last day I was there that you were going to chew them out, that was not a chewing out in my terms.

Mr. S.: A gentle chewing out.

Int: But you certainly got your point across. Your respect for the kids.

Mr. S.: With all the adults in the class, they are starting to respond. My correction is very gentle. There is a fantasy there too. Like I'm doing a John Wayne imitation. I'm Uncle Shelby and Uncle Shelby is upset, I keep the fantasy going and they really love that. They seem to like that I never take off the mask and say "you guys are going to get it." If I do have heavy duty discipline I do it out of the class. Like a kid that's being obnoxious, I won't scold him openly, I'll take him out, do it privately with phone calls, suspensions and stuff. I keep it friendly inside.

Mr. Shelby liked to challenge himself as a teacher and worked hard to motivate his students.

Mr. S: Well you know we are in the T.V. age and the kids are being used to being entertained so we have to perform more. When I first started teaching I could get away with a very dry lesson straight by the book, straight by the curriculum guide and I could

> get away with it. These kids tune out so quickly. They are used to a Robin Williams so you become Robin Williams. You have to act up there. I find personally like if you really want to win them over I know I can make them behave, be quite straight....I want them to love language as much as I do.

This class was challenging to teach. Four students were under direct teacher aide supervision and attended behaviour management classes each week. Mr. Shelby described the class as being a very weak group who were weak in study skills and weak in attention span. The challenge they presented, he felt, was "related to managing this class and at the same time trying to run a creative and provocative program." He had observed them the previous year and said they had difficulty following a lesson "without climbing the walls". He felt it would be an accomplishment to have them sit quietly at all and even more so if they actually were excited and involved in a lesson.

During my period of observation there was a noticeable change in the class's behaviour. It was difficult for Mr. Shelby to motivate them in October but by the end of January, most of the students were excited and involved in their learning.

THE LANGUAGE ARTS CLASSROOM

The development of Mr. Shelby's language arts program had evolved over the eighteen years he had been teaching. He had taught high school and junior high before coming to elementary teaching where he had taught for the past eight years. His approach had been influenced by his own learning experiences as a student and by other teachers whose approach to teaching language arts was memorable.

Mr. Shelby had developed a language arts program which he hoped would "instill in his students a love of language. I want them to love language as much as I do." He stated that he had organized his language arts program so that students were exposed to the different ways language could be used. Mr. Shelby had majored in literature in university and used fantasy literature for the novel studies portion of his language arts program.

He chose fantasy literature as he felt the students enjoyed it "because they could see magic happen in the novels." He had settled on three novels, The Black Cauldron by Lloyd Alexander, Taran Wanderer by Lloyd Alexander and The Neverending Story by Michael Ende. The students were required to read a chapter a night and were assigned questions which were discussed the following day. The questions required the students to find the information needed for an answer in the text, or they were given a quote from the text and were asked to reflect on what the quote meant. Mr. Shelby believed that "the purpose of studying literature is a way for children to discover themselves as they discover literature." He expected the students to develop philosphies based on the reading and discussions they did in class. In discussing his approach to teaching the novels Mr. Shelby stated "I like to feel I added to their bank of ideas and philosophies that they have developed by personal reading, viewing, personal experiences, etc. I often develop concepts and philosophies by referring to students experiences." Mr. Shelby stated that he based the whole philosophy of his language arts program on the philosophy behind The Neverending Story," by reading the book and daydreaming you are fulfilling your own wishes and are finding out who you are and what you want out of life. You only enjoy a book if you see yourself in the book and the book becomes you."

In the past Mr. Shelby began the year with a study of The Neverending Story and worked on the themes of the novel throughout the year. This year however, because he felt this class had weaker comprehension skills he decided to build towards the themes in The Neverending Story by studying The Black Cauldron and Taran Wanderer first.

Mr. Shelby liked to "give the students insights into words, where words come from so that words are making sense." The students studied word roots and the history of words, and Mr. Shelby gave some examples of the origin of words to demonstrate that words can be fun. An example he used was the word muscle which comes from the Latin word muscular which means little mouse. When you flex your muscles the Romans thought they saw a little mouse. Word root studies were done every day. Mr. Shelby taught a new word root each week and did a continual review of previously studied words. The students were given a list of words. Their meanings were discussed and as a follow-up the students were required to match the word to the correct meaning.

Mr. Shelby said that he noticed an increase in the students' vocabulary. They made a conscious effort to use the words they had studied. He also said that students from previous years would come back and tell him that the word studies helped them understand new words they were encountering in their reading. Mr. Shelby taught

French to this class and he felt that the word studies helped the students see the connections between French and English.

With the creative writing portion of the language arts program Mr. Shelby tried to stress a different skill each time he did writing. He would mark what they did and put examples of writing errors on the board for the students to edit the mistakes. The students were also studying song writing techniques in music. Mr. Shelby had the students write their own songs as a way to integrate the music lessons with writing skills in language arts. Mr. Shelby believed "that memory work was the foundation of the English language and English literature." He had the students memorize Mark Anthony's funeral speech about Ceasar and also Emily Dickinson's poem "I'm Nobody". When I observed the students reciting these works I was impressed by the atmosphere that existed in the room. The students were really enjoying the activity. There was a lot of laughter and joking taking place. The rapport Mr. Shelby had with the students was very evident. The class supported each other when presenting the poems or speeches by offering words of encouragement or filling in parts the presentors were missing. Some of the students enjoyed using their dramatic skills and acted out the parts without being self conscious. Mr. Shelby stated that he was evaluating their performances but this seemed to be an informal evaluation. He supported the students who were presenting and made joking comments about their dramatic abilities. The atmosphere was very relaxed and the students were obviously enjoying the activity. Two of my informants told me they loved the memory work because they got to act.

The morning language arts period did not have a set pattern for activities although usually the novel study was done first. The students sat at their tables and took turns reading the questions and providing answers from their homework that should have been completed the night before. Usually this discussion was led by Mr. Shelby and began with a discussion of the meaning of the quotations that had been assigned. Answers to the questions were also usually written on the board or overhead. The questions for the next chapter were also displayed on the board or overhead, and the students would copy these down during this discussion period. Mr. Shelby usually gave the students time at the end of the discussion of the assigned questions to work on the next chapter's questions. There seemed to be no set time allotment for the novel discussion but it seemed to depend on the involvement of the students and Mr. Shelby's judgement of the quality of the answers. If the students appeared to be having difficulty he would spend more time on discussion of the answers. There also were occasions when additional time was given because the students were enthusiastic and involved in the discussion. The students usually worked from their seats with Mr. Shelby leading the discussion at the front of the room. The exception was the "ruling emperor or empress" who sometimes sat at the throne. The emperor or empress could also choose which other students could sit on the couch or chairs beside them. When Mr. Shelby felt sufficient time was spent on one activity he would move on to the next. Morning recess at 10:35 sometimes dictated the conclusion of an activity and the commencement of a new activity after recess. Mr. Shelby usually had a timetable on the board listing the order of the activities and a time the activties would take place but this schedule seemed to be flexible. What was consistent was that language arts was scheduled from 8:45 to 12:00. Sometimes he would begin the class with a writing activity or a word study activity. The order was not rigidly adhered to but it seemed that each of these activities were taught each day. Occasionally the morning began with a session of model parliament and class business was discussed at this time. On Wednesday mornings the students had gym and the language arts period began at 9:30 instead of the usual 8:45 time.

Mobility was not encouraged in the classroom. The students could chat with their neighbours when Mr. Shelby wasn't teaching if they weren't disturbing their classmates. Note passing was an acceptable means of communicating, and Mr. Shelby frequently wrote notes to the students. Certain sessions of model parliament encouraged this practice and pages were assigned to deliver the messages.

Mr. Shelby encouraged his students to be independent workers and frequently reminded students about assignments that were due. He expected the students to be working on assigned activities or reading their novels when they had any free time. Time to work on assignments was usually given approximately 15 minutes before recess and lunch break. It was common at this time for students to approach Mr. Shelby and discuss assignments or share an item of interest with him. It was often difficult for Mr. Shelby to get away or get students outside at these times.

Ms. Fortin, Mr. Shelby's aide, was very mobile in the class, keeping track of the students assigned to her. She usually communicated with these students by giving them a note. There were times, though, when she would physically move near the students to observe their behaviour or work. Ms. Fortin also frequently stayed at recess to chat with the students.

On Thursday mornings, there was a thirty minute library period at 11:30 a.m. The students exchanged books or did free reading at this time. The one time I observed this class the students and Mr. Shelby were engrossed in their books and there was complete silence in the library.

Introduction of the Students

Travis

Travis was a pleasant mannered 11 year old boy of east Indian descent. He spoke his native language Malayalum and was active in the Malayalum language school that he attended.

I was interested to see if Travis' cultural background influenced in any way the connections he was making between the learning activities and his background knowledge. After our initial interview where he explained how involved he was in events at his language school and in his cultural community, I saw no evidence that his cultural background influenced his responses to learning activities.

Travis' ability in language arts was considered by his teacher to be above average. He had high academic expectations and often read to improve himself. Ms. Fortin had told me that Travis wanted to be a doctor. She had seen him reading his mother's medical notes. His mother was an R.N. Travis had a variety of hobbies. He collected coins, stamps, marbles, cards and comics. He liked to play role playing games with his friends and Ms. Fortin, the teacher's aide.

When his friends came to his house he was the gamemaster but when he played with others outside his home, such as with Ms. Fortin, they would be the gamemasters.

Travis informed me that he liked to read and enjoyed mysteries, comics, horror fiction and books about science. He liked doing science experiments and wanted to learn more about the atom, electronics, and computers. He did not like the science program because he found it boring since he could not learn about the things he was interested in.

He told me that he did not like to write and he had to do a lot of this in Mr. Shelby's class.

Travis had a very respectful attitude towards teachers and was described by Ms. Fortin as being very tolerant of his classmates, particularly those he strongly disliked. Both Ms. Fortin and Mr. Shelby had noticed a change in Travis' confidence level during the first three months. He had become much more outgoing in class even to the point of being slightly disruptive with his talking. Travis was an active participant in class discussions and was always prepared with his homework completed.

He was always eager to share his work with me and I found him to be very open and honest during our discussions.

Roxanne

Roxanne was a tall, rather large framed girl. She was considered to be of superior intelligence by her teacher but had difficulties performing academically because of her personal problems. Roxanne's mother had recently remarried and was expecting a baby. Both Mr.

Shelby and Ms. Fortin felt Roxanne needed extra attention. She sometimes did not apply herself, but with prompting was usually able to improve her efforts. From my observations, and Ms. Fortins', it was felt that she seemed to need constant guidance, indicating some immaturity on her part. She was a good reader and shared with me that she liked to read adventure books. She also liked movies "a lot."

Roxanne had difficulty with the first two novels The Black Cauldron and Taran Wanderer. She said she found it distracting to read in class. Roxanne enjoyed drama and the acting opportunities she had in Mr. Shelby's class. She knew she was considered a chatterbox and thought this was amusing. Roxanne shared her work reluctantly at first because she felt she hadn't done a good job. As our rapport developed I felt there was a genuine warmth expressed by Roxanne and she seemed to look forward to our sharing time.

Ms. Fortin and Roxanne had developed a close friendship and Ms. Fortin shared that "practically every day she gives me a hug. I feel she is lost but wants to be found."

Curtis

Curtis was a very innovative and creative student. He was described by his teacher as being "definitely a dramatic arts type." Curtis loved to perform and could be a "real ham," when he knew he had a captive audience. He was considered an average student in regards to his ability in language arts. From my observations I found him to be very energetic and an active learner who tended to get scattered, in different directions when excited about a topic. At times it seemed he physically was unable to keep up with his brain's activity. He took his class responsibilities seriously and generally was considered to be a hard worker by both Mr. Shelby and Ms. Fortin.

Curtis' personality stood out in the class. He seemed not to be influenced by his peers and was uninhibited when taking part in any classroom activity. Yet he maintained a good rapport with his classmates. They seemed to accept and enjoy his sometimes bizarre behaviour. Curtis enjoyed being in Mr. Shelby's class. They had developed a relationship where Curtis referred to Mr. Shelby as "Dad" and Mr. Shelby called him "my son."

Curtis liked to read. He liked action books, and sometimes read Judy Blume books. He also enjoyed fantasy such as The Black Cauldron, and had read C.S. Lewis' books. These he described as being "awesome." Curtis also enjoyed the role-playing type of games he played on his Sega games system. He read X Factor comics and enjoyed writing. Our discussions were lively and Curtis seemed to enjoy the opportunity he had to entertain me with his dramatic abilities. He seemed to look forward to our sharing sessions and was always willing to discuss his work.

Jeannette

At first Jeannette seemed to be a shy and extremely quiet student. She was pleasant and well mannered in class and during our initial interview. Further observations and meetings revealed that Jeannette was very popular with her classmates and was confident when expressing opinions. She was tolerant with her classmates but could also stand her ground when pushed. Mr. Shelby described her as being a student of high intelligence who excelled in all areas. Jeannette was a responsible student who always completed her homework and took on extra responsibilities. She was captain of the patrols, Prime Minister of the class and ran a class newspaper. Mr. Shelby and Ms. Fortin were in agreement that she was a "model student." When discussing Jeannette's character, Ms. Fortin stated "Jeannette is probably as well adjusted as any person could hope for in a child."

Jeannette spent a lot of time alone because both her parents worked. She told me during our first interview that she was born in Canada and her parents were Philipino and half Chinese. This was the only reference Jeannette made to her cultural background throughout the study. She liked to read "thriller novels, murder mysteries, and teenage cheerleader novels." Jeannette also sometimes played challenge games with her friends. She enjoyed being in Mr. Shelby's class because of the teasing and fun they had. Jeannette was always willing to share and discuss her work.

CHAPTER V

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

MAKING THE CONNECTION BETWEEN BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE AND THE LEARNING TASK

"Despite the immense importance classroom lessons have on children's reading acquisition, very little is known about how children actually read and learn to read in the classroom" (Mosenthal, 1984, p. 16).

How the students in this one classroom used their background knowledge seemed to depend on the type of activity assigned and the expectations of the teacher.

NOVEL STUDIES

Mr. Shelby believed in a literature-based reading program. "Literature is a way to get involved in the stories they read and in the process learn something about themselves." He stated that he preferred fantasy literature because he felt the children enjoyed it and were able "to fantasize with these books and see magic occur." He liked to build a classroom fantasy related to some of the themes in the books being studied. He discussed the ideas behind the events in the stories being studied and continually made allusions during the day to these events. He purposely chose the novels he studied so that he could make these types of allusions. He expected students "to develop philosophies based on readings we do in class."

> I like to feel that I add to their bank of ideas and philosophies that they have developed by personal reading, movie viewing, personal experiences, etc. I

> often develop concepts and philosophies by referring to students experiences. For example the concept of the wonder of imagination. I'll ask the students "How many of you have had a dream that you were really upset to wake up from, then you went back to sleep and tried to reenter the dream? Then I move to a language arts project - retell your most interesting dream using the overhead projector and shadows. (Interview data October 25)

Mr. Shelby believed that by reading the books he assigned "students were able to fulfill their own wishes, and find out what they want out of life and who they were." The students were usually assigned a chapter a night to read and were required to answer follow-up questions.

The questions assigned with the novel study were of two types: those that required information retrieval and could be answered by reading for details or by making inferences from the text, and those involving quotations that were assigned for the students to interpret and reflect on. The students responses would be based on the understanding they had of the quotation and the way they were able to relate this understanding of the quote to their personal stock of knowledge. For example the students were given this quote from chapter three of The Black Cauldron and were expected to explain the quote and tell how they felt about what was being said. "There is much to be known," said Adon "and above all much to be loved, be it turn of the seasons or the shape of a river, pebble, indeed the more we find love, the more we add to the measure of our hearts."

The students were assigned three novels to read during the period of my observations in the classroom. The first was The Black Cauldron by Lloyd Alexander, the second was Taran Wanderer by Lloyd Alexander and the third was The Neverending Story by Michael Ende. The novel study lessons for The Black Cauldron were usually scheduled for first class of the day. Questions that had been assigned the previous day were discussed.

The format of the lesson was that Mr. Shelby would have some students read the questions and other students would read their answers. The class as a whole generally appeared to have difficulty answering the questions and reflecting on the quotes for the novel. Mr. Shelby had difficulty motivating them and the class responses to the questions, and the reflections, were usually limited to just a few students giving the answers. I also observed students copying the answers from the board or from the overhead where Mr. Shelby had recorded them. He led much of the discussion of the questions and struggled to keep the class with him and involved with the discussions.

When Mr. Shelby and I discussed the class's progress with the novel study he felt that the more capable students were understanding the novel and able to reflect on the quotations given. He also felt that many of the students were not doing the reading needed for the class. He recognized that the students were struggling and felt he needed to devote more class time to oral reading of the novel. He did not feel the novels were above the reading ability of the class.

Mr. Shelby had to work hard at trying to motivate the students to get them involved. He evaluated the students' progress of the novel study by collecting the students' responses to the questions and correcting the grammar. He also assigned a board game task where the students had to demonstrate their understanding of the novel through designing a board game. The students were excited and enthusiastic about designing their games. The games were discussed during each novel study class and the students were eager to share how they were going to include certain characters or events as challenges in the game. Mr. Shelby's reason for assigning the board game was, "I know the board game has all of their attention so that part of the activity is reaching everyone." The objective was that through playing the game another person who was not familiar with the story could learn what the novel was about. A quiz was also given as a form of evaluation. The students were given a list of character names and a list of statements or quotes and were to match the correct statement or quote with the correct character.

For many of the students The Black Cauldron was their first experience with fantasy.

Cory: It's okay, it's not my favorite kind of book.

Int: No, why?

Cory: It's just that I'm not into that kind of pretend novel. I like novels like Stephen King's book.

Int: Oh those kind. You like more scary stuff. Did you find it easy to read?

Cory: Uh, huh, it was easy. It had big enough letters and I finished it.

Int: But didn't you get into the characters at all?

Cory: Well, sort of. I got into Taran but it wasn't my favourite kind of book that I'd like to read again and again.

Int: What other kinds of books do you like to read beside

Stephen King?

Cory: I usually read the Hardy Boys and Garfield.

Carol, when asked if she liked *The Black Cauldron* replied:

Carol: Ya, I read it. It's good.

Int: Do you read this kind of book at home?

Carol: Well, I have some Sweet Valley High books and I read those and I've got Laura Ingalls books except I don't really have that many scary books.

Int: Are you enjoying *The Black Cauldron*?

Chrystal: Ya.

Int: Do you read that sort of book at home?

Chrystal: Well my brother has *The Book of Three*.

Int: What other stuff do you read?

Chrystal: I like mystery stories. Well I really like Nancy Drew and I used to read Hardy Boys.

Int: How are you doing with *The Black Cauldron*? Are you enjoying it?

Eddy: Ya, its really good. I'm reading another book that's like part two of it.

Int: Ah *The Book of Three* or the next one.

Eddy: No, *Taran Wanderer*.

Int: Oh great, do you read that sort of stuff regularly at home? Have you ever read it before?

Eddy: No not really. It's kind of like a first time.

Int: Did you read this sort of book before? Have you ever read this sort of book before you came to Mr. Shelby's room?

Adam: (shakes head, no)

Int: So you're not a fantasy person? What do you read at home?

Adam: I like reading true stories like Anne Frank and some other books.

Although many of the students struggled with their understanding and interest in reading The Black Cauldron, their board games revealed they had gained a general understanding of the novel. In most games important events were displayed in the sequence in which they took place in the novel, and important characters were highlighted. When I discussed how they had chosen events for their games with the informants, they told me they had used the questions for the novels or went through the novel chapter by chapter picking out key events and characters.

Mr. Shelby felt some were good but the performance of the class was below the class performance of last year's grade six class. He attributed this to the lower ability level of the class.

Discussions with the students revealed that some of the students

2

had previous experience with challenge types of games. However, many did not know what a challenge type of game was but had experience with traditional board games. When Mr. Shelby set the task he did not model the type of game he expected from the students. He felt most of the students knew what he wanted. Discussion with the students revealed that some were having difficultly designing their games, especially if they did not have previous experience playing these games.

Chad: "I'm finding it a bit hard to do a board game.

Robin: Well, like I didn't make it like the others, like I haven't ever made a board game like that. Challenging with the cards. I've never done that before.

Mr. Shelby's expectations for the games were, "that to create a proper board game the student must know the story quite thoroughly. The board game focuses the student (that is if he is willing) to organize critical events into visual form, that he could manipulate with his own imagination and recreate the adventure in a personal reliving of the adventure." The students demonstrated an ability to organize critical events into visual form but in many cases were unable to meet Mr. Shelby's expectations of using their imaginations to create a challenge type of game that would be a reliving of the adventure.

There may be three reasons why the students were having difficulty meeting Mr. Shelby's expectations for the game. 1) The students lacked the experience with fantasy literature and were not able to comprehend the novels to the extent that they were able to internalize and recreate the experience. For many of the students this was their initial encounter with fantasy literature and the language of the first two novels The Black Cauldron and Taran Wanderer by Lloyd Alexander was extremely difficult for the students to understand, mainly because of the use of figurative language which was very descriptive and metaphoric. Also Celtic names and old English words were used which many of the students were unfamiliar with and found difficult to pronounce. The language of the text contained complex syntax which also made the text difficult for the students to comprehend. Even more able students who seemed to have experience with fantasy literature struggled with the text. The following excerpt from Taran Wanderer demonstrates the language discussed above.

> "Farewell," called the cantrev lord as the companions mounted. "At the stronghold of Gast the Generous you'll ever find an openhanded welcome!"
>
> "It's a generosity that could strove us to death," Taran, laughing, remarked to the bard as they rode eastward again. "Gast thinks himself openhanded, as Goryon thinks himself valorous; and as far as I can judge, neither one has the truth of it. "Yet," he added. "they both seem pleased with themselves. Indeed, is a man truly what he sees himself to be?"
>
> "Only if what he sees is true," answered Fflewddur. "If there's too great a difference between his own opinion and the facts-ah-then, my friend, I should say that such a man had no more substance to him than Goryon's giants!"
> "But don't judge them too harshly," the bard went on. "These cantrev nobles are much alike, prickly as porcupines one moment and friendly as puppies the next. They all hoard their possessions, yet they can be generous to a fault if the mood strikes them. As for valor, they're no cowards. Death rides in the saddle

> with them and they count it nothing, and in battle I've seen them gladly lay down their lives for a comrade!" At the same time," he added, "it's also been my experience, in all my wanderings, that the further from the deed, the greater it grows, and the most glorious battle is the one longest past. So it's hardly surprising how many heroes you run into."
>
> "Had they harps like mine," said Fflewddur, warily glancing at his instrument, "what a din you'd hear from every stronghold in Prydain!"
> (Excerpt from Taran Wanderer p. 59).

2) The reading level of the novel may have been above the students' reading ability and thus had not been able to understand the events of the novel to the extent necessary to complete this task. When I discussed the Black Cauldron with my four informants they found the names of the characters difficult to pronounce and remember and also they found the language difficult to understand. They were able to gain a general understanding of the events of the novel after Mr. Shelby explained what they read in class, but could not comprehend much of the text on their own. As there were many students whose ability in language arts was considered below average, I question whether they were able to understand enough of the text to complete the game assignment to meet Mr. Shelby's expectations even if they had considerable experience playing challenge type of games.

3) Even if the students had gained a sufficient level of understanding to complete the task, they were unable to do so because they did not know what was involved in designing a challenge type of game. When the students shared their games with me, I observed that there appeared to be three types of games produced. Those that showed evidence of some understanding of the novels in that they had included the major

characters and events of the novel but they were weak with their game design and did not include options and elements characteristic of challenge types of games. These students also shared that they did not play challenge games. The second type of games were strong on challenge elements from the story. These students shared that they had found the novels difficult to read and weren't sure what elements from the story to put in their games. The third type of games were those Mr. Shelby considered to be good games and ones that had shown a good understanding of the novel and knowledge of the elements of a challenge type of game. These games included important characters and events from the story as well as many choices and options presented to potential game players. He felt that their games could teach the novel to those who were unfamiliar with the story. All of these students said they played challenge types of games. Their games displayed how they had taken their knowledge of challenge games and coupled it with their knowledge of the story to integrate the two together and create a visual display of the novel through the game.

To be successful in completing this task the students needed previous experience with challenge types of games and a fairly good understanding of the novel. The students who were successful in completing this task were those with previous experience with challenge types of games and had a fairly good understanding of the novel.

The second novel, Taran Wander followed The Black Cauldron and many of the students found they enjoyed it more. This may be because they now were familiar with this type of novel and were also familiar with the characters. They had gained some background knowledge about fantasy literature, the characters, the types of events taking place and general format of this type of novel by reading The Black Cauldron. They may also have gained a better understanding of Mr. Shelby's expectations for novel studies. In gaining this background knowledge, they are able to build on what they now know and are gaining a greater understanding of the second novel.

One student was very excited about Taran Wanderer and was eager to talk to me about what he was doing. He had made up his own questions on each chapter of the novel that he read. He hoped the student teacher would use them with the rest of the class. He also had made a map of the land described in Taran Wanderer. He said he liked Taran Wanderer better than The Black Cauldron because he could imagine the places better and because the characters were going to more interesting places. He was displaying evidence of using knowledge gained from reading The Black Cauldron to get more out of this second novel. This is evidence that he is making connections between the two novels.

This novel was assigned mostly to be read by the students themselves. Questions were assigned for each chapter to be discussed in class. I did not observe the students working on Taran Wanderer because the student teacher had taken over the class and I had made the decision to interrupt my field work at this time.

The Neverending Story was the third novel studied and one that Mr. Shelby usually liked to do at the beginning of the year. He stated that he preferred to do this novel first because"....the themes are so profound and heavy duty (even though the reading level for the novel is so high), so many of the themes such as "the gentle authority of the emperor" are a part of my personal philosophy that I build during the year."

Mr. Shelby worked on the themes that are in The Neverending Story to help the students see themselves through the story. He based the whole philosophy of his language arts program on The Neverending Story. His hope was that "through reading the book the students will be able to fulfill their own wishes and find out who they are and what they want out of life." He used the novel to get the students thinking about their own personal growth. He made continual allusions to characters in the novel and built on the themes in the novel to create a continual fantasy in the classroom. He sometimes took on the role of one of the characters in the novel such as Smaug the dragon. He'd refer to himself as Smaug when he was angry and wanted the students to do something for him. Mr. Shelby said students from previous years would come back and refer to him as Smaug and keep the fantasy going. He felt this was important "because they're familiar with the literature, they continue to make allusions."

In doing Taran Wanderer and The Black Cauldron first this year he felt he was able to build towards an understanding of the themes of The Neverending Story. The students' response to the book seemed to be enthusiastic. Classroom discussions were livelier and more students were raising their hands to respond and enter into discussions than with the previous two novels. In reading the two other fantasy books first they were able to gain experience with fantasy literature and it was evident that it seemed to contribute to their enjoyment of the literature. When I interviewed the four informants about The Neverending Story and how they were enjoying it, they were able to explain how they saw similar character development between the three main characters of each novel and they stated that they found the novel easier to read. This may be due to the fact that they now had experience with fantasy literature from reading the two previous novels or because the language of The Neverending Story was less complex than that of Taran Wanderer and The Black Cauldron.

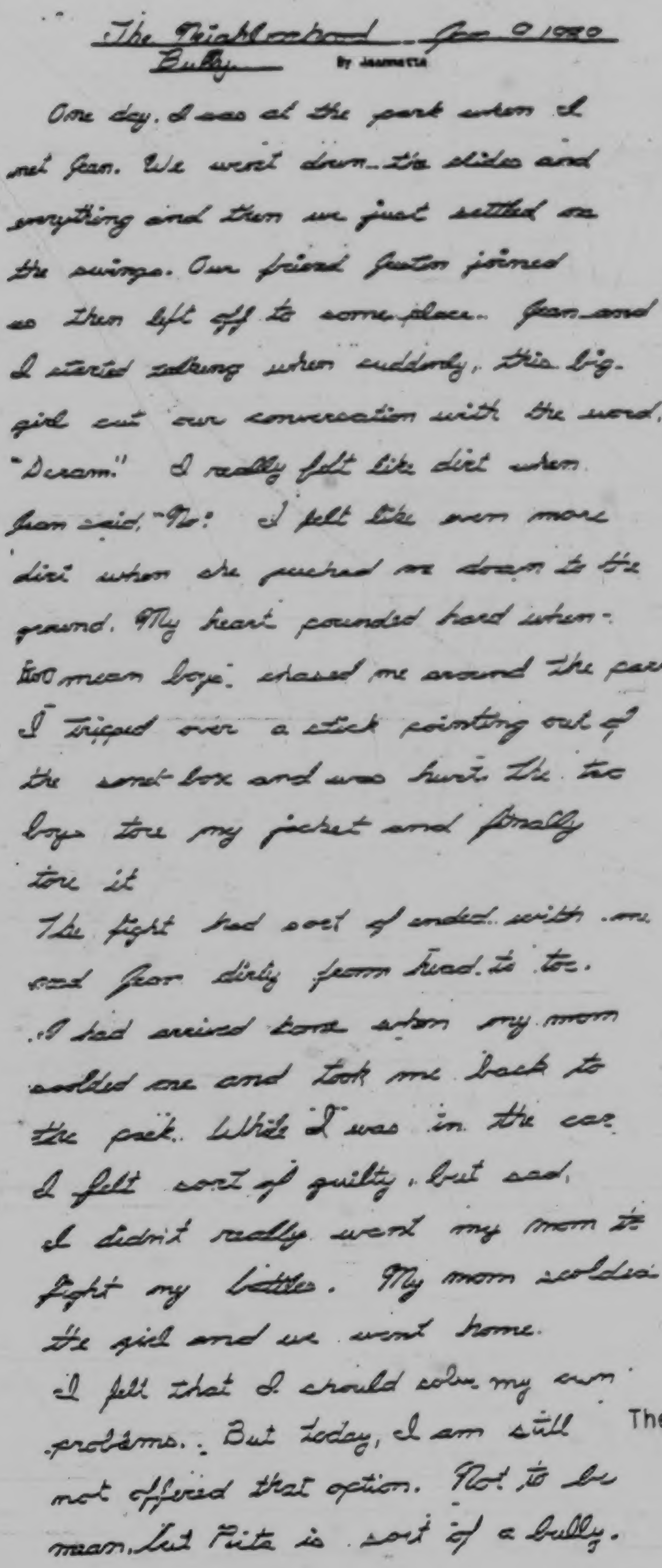
> Bastian liked books that were exciting or funny, or that made him dream. Books were made-up characters had marvelous adventures, books that made him imagine all sorts of things.
>
> Because one thing he was good at, possibly the only thing, was imagining things so clearly that he almost saw and heard them. When he told himself stories, he sometimes forgot everything around him and awoke - as though from a dream - only when the story was finished. And this book was just like his own stories! In reading it, he had heard not only the creaking of the big trees and the howling of the wind in the treetops, but also the different voices of the four comical messengers. And he almost seemed to catch the smell of moss and forest earth.
>
> Down in the classroom they were starting in on nature study. That consisted almost entirely in counting pistils and stamens. Bastian was glad to be up here in his hiding place, where he could read. This, he thought, was just the right book for him!
>
> ……………………
>
> A week later Vooshvazool, the little night-hob, arrived at his destination. He was the first. Or rather, he thought he was first, because he was riding through the air.
>
> Just as the setting sun turned the clouds to liquid gold, he noticed that his bat was circling over the Labyrinth. That was the name of an enormous garden, extending from horizon to horizon and filled with the most bewitching scents and dreamlike colours. Broad avenues and

> narrow paths twined their way among copses, lawns, and beds of the rarest, strangest flowers in a design so artful and intricate that the whole plain resembled an enormous maze. Of course, it had been designed only for pleasure and amusement, with no intention of endangering anyone, much less warding off an enemy. It would have been useless for such purposes, and the Childlike Empress required no such protection, because in all the unbounded reaches of Fantastica there was no one who would have thought of attacking her. For that there was a reason, as we shall soon see. (Excerpt from The Neverending Story pgs. 23-24).

The narrative language of this novel seemed to be at a more appropriate reading level for the students and was more contemporary in its style than The Black Cauldron and Taran Wanderer. The author's use of simile seemed to make the text easy for the students to understand.

The students identified with the main character Sabastian who was bullied. Class discussion of bullying and being bullied was lively and students shared their personal experiences through a story they wrote about bullying. It was obvious in their stories that they were able to make connections between their own personal experience and those of the main character in the novel (See Figures 1 and 2). Discussion of Sabastian being bullied enabled Jeannette to draw from her own personal experience of being bullied and she wrote about this experience.

Curtis' experience was that of being the bully so he wrote about this experience. These are examples of how the students who have previous background knowledge of the topic are able to use this knowledge to relate to the text they are reading and area able to comprehend what they are reading because it relates to what they already know.

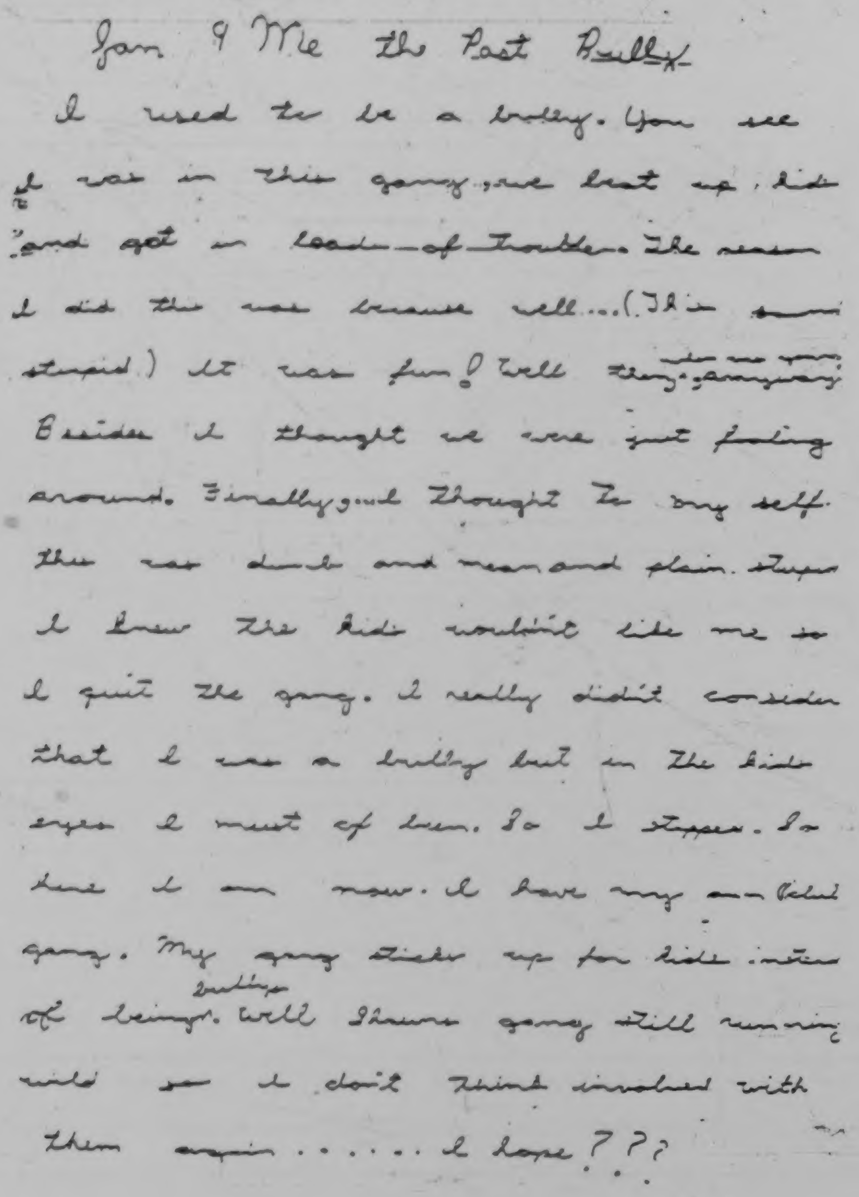


The Neighbourhood Jan 9 1980
Bully By Jeannette

One day. I was at the park when I
met Jean. We went down the slides and
everything and then we just settled on
the swings. Our friend Justin joined
us then left off to some place. Jean and
I started talking when suddenly, this big
girl cut our conversation with the word,
"Scram." I really felt like dirt when
Jean said, "No." I felt like even more
dirt when she pushed me down to the
ground. My heart pounded hard when
two mean boys chased me around the park.
I tripped over a stick pointing out of
the sand box and was hurt. The two
boys tore my jacket and finally
tore it
The fight had sort of ended with me
and Jean dirty from head to toe.
I had arrived home when my mom
scolded me and took me back to
the park. While I was in the car
I felt sort of guilty, but sad,
I didn't really want my mom to
fight my battles. My mom scolded
the girl and we went home.
I felt that I should solve my own
problems. But today, I am still
not offered that option. Not to be
mean, but Pita is sort of a bully.

FIGURE 1.

The Neighbourhood Bully by Jeannette



Jan 9 Me the Past Bully

I used to be a bully. You see I was in this gang, we beat up kids and got in loads of trouble. The reason I did this was because well....(This sounds stupid) It was fun! Well they, anyway Besides I thought we were just fooling around. Finally, I thought to my self. this was dumb and mean and plain stupid I knew the kids wouldn't like me so I quit the gang. I really didn't consider that I was a bully but in the kids eyes I must of been. So I stopped. So here I am now. I have my own [illegible] gang. My gang sticks up for kids instead of being bullys. Well Shawns gang still running wild so I don't think involved with them again...... I hope???

FIGURE 2. Me The Past Bully by Curtis

The students identified with Bastian, the main character, in his real life situation and his becoming involved with the story seemed also to draw the students into the story. Many students told me they liked this transition back and forth from reality to fantasy.

Another example of the students being able to relate the main characters' experience to their own personal experiences was when Mr. Shelby was discussing the expectations Sabastian's father had of him. The students could relate this to the expectations their parents had of them. They shared these freely during the class discussion.

The following excerpt from The Neverending Story illustrates the differences in writing style between Taran Wanderer and The Neverending Story.

A board game was assigned again as a form of evaluation of the students' understanding of the novel. The students seemed more confident about what they were going to do with their board game. Mr. Shelby, having learned that some students needed help with the previous game, decided to work through the game with them and discuss in detail what elements were to be put on the game. Some students preferred to do a role playing game and Mr. Shelby gave them permission to do so. The students' actions in class and the enthusiasm displayed seemed to indicate that they were much more motivated and involved with this novel. This could indicate that their stock of knowledge of fantasy literature had developed, providing experience to draw from when encountering other literature of the same genre.

Travis

Travis enjoyed fantasy and liked to play role playing types of games. Sometimes he would be the gamesmaster and sometimes his friend would be. He also played with Ms. Fortin, the class aide, after school. He was familiar with several types of challenge and role playing types of games.

Int:	Now you play these types of games don't you at home a lot. Do you do it with videos? You have books, right?
Travis:	Well there's two kinds. You could use a video. I prefer the books. I don't really enjoy video. I go to my friends. He's my gamesmaster and to other people when they come to my house I'm the gamesmaster.
Int:	You play with Ms. Fortin sometimes too. That's Dungeons and Dragons you play?
Travis:	No, Gerps. Its a new game.
Int:	You like board games. You like the idea of doing a board game?
Travis:	Yup, but I wish we would have any choice. Not only a board game but a role playing game, not with dice.

He went on to explain what a role playing game involved. Travis had no difficulty designing his board game because of his experience playing these games. In his game design there was evidence of elements from other games he played, significant elements from the novel and elements that demonstrated his understanding of what a challenge game was. He used characters and events from the story to create choices or challenge type situations for the game players. Travis explained that he used weapons like those from Dungeons and Dragons and had given choices like those he frequently found in GERPs a role playing game he played. He modified the game so that he used elements from the novel instead of those he was familiar with from the challenge games he played. Travis' game displayed how he modified prior experiences with challenge games and integrated the knowledge he had of the novel to design a new game.

Travis seemed to enjoy reading Taran Wanderer. He read ahead of the assigned nightly readings. I had Travis read some passages to me and he demonstrated his understanding of what he was reading by answering the stimulated recall questions I was asking him as we read. I would stop him after having read a paragraph or two and question him about what was happening and what would happen next. Travis was able to make predictions based on what he had read and could make inferences from what he read. He did have difficulty, however, understanding parts of the book that required philosophical reflection. Travis read the following excerpt:

"Gast thinks himself open handed, as Goryan thinks himself valorous; and as far as I can judge, neither one has the truth of it. Yet", he added, "they both seemed pleased with themselves. Indeed is a man truly what he sees himself to be?" (Taran Wanderer p.56) I asked him what the last sentence meant and he replied, "Gast is only interested in his possessions." Travis had gained an understanding from his reading of what the main character was like, but was unable to understand the author's intended message with this particular quote. He seemed to be having difficulty with the text so drew on his background knowledge to create some kind of meaning. Travis' inability to understand and reflect on this philosophical quote, may be the type of comprehension problem that the class in general was experiencing when they had difficulty reflecting on the quotes assigned for the The Black Cauldron.

Travis did not seem to be as interested in reading The Neverending Story as he was with the two previous books. When I asked him about this he said he found The Neverending Story boring because the adventures that the main character had were too long, and they dragged. When he was assigned the task of writing an adventure to be added to the book, he added humour to his adventure. "I wanted to put some humour into it. Because I thought this story would be boring" (See Appendix A). He also felt that he would like to design a role playing game instead of a board game. Wanting to try a new way of demonstrating his knowledge of the novel could be due to the fact that Travis had so much experience with challenge types of games and he knew which type he found the most interesting. Being bored with the novel indicates Travis has the background experience with fantasy literature that enables him to evaluate the quality of literature he likes. He knew what he liked because he had the past experience to use as a comparison.

Jeannette

Jeannette liked reading thriller novels and murder mysteries. Her favourite book was The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe which had been read to her as a class novel in grade three. She also liked "those stories about high schools and cheerleaders."

Jeannette read The Black Cauldron and completed the questions that were assigned for each chapter. She had no difficulty answering the questions that required finding the answers directly in the text. She did, however, have difficulty reflecting on the quotations. Her answers displayed a lack of comprehension of the quote's meanings. This may be due to the fact that Jeannette found The Black Cauldron text difficult to understand.

Jeannette: "Well, the Cauldron, I didn't like it that much so now I'm starting to like this one because I understand it because the Cauldron was hard to understand.

The "this one" that Jeannette is referring to is Taran Wanderer, the second novel studied. She was enjoying it more because she understood it. I asked her if this might be because she had read The Black Cauldron and maybe was more familiar with things in the book. She responded that she knew who the people were now. They were hard to understand in The Black Cauldron. Jeannette was a good reader but, like Travis, experienced difficulty with the passages from the book that required philosophical reflection. In the following example Jeannette demonstrated an understanding of everything else she had read except the direct quote I asked her about.

Jeannette read, "Why, they rule themselves', answered Smoit. "Strong and steadfast they are, too. And by my beard, I'm sure there's more peace and neighbourliness in the Free Commots than anywhere else in Prydain. And so what need have they for kings, or lords? When you come to the

> meat of it," He added, "A king's strength lies in the will of those he rules." (Taran Wanderer, p. 63).

Int: Okay what does that mean Jeannette? "when you come to the meat of it, a kings strength lies in the will of those he rules."

Jeannette: Okay, they honour the king Math and like, they're sort of like true. They don't have a ruler and they only honour king Math himself. Like they rule themselves and they let themselves be so.

When Jeannette says she finds it hard to understand she may be referring to parts of the book like this that require her to relate in a way that is beyond her reading level. Jeannette saying she does not "like" is perhaps another way of saying she does not understand what she has to read.

Jeannette: I think the novel study is okay as long as you like the book, but if you do a novel study and you don't like the book, that's another story.

Even though Jeannette did not like the book, she demonstrated through her board game that she had understood the significant events and identified significant characters and had included them in her game. She also demonstrated that she understood the elements of a challenge game and had included cards, dice and a choice of paths to follow as ways to challenge her players. Jeannette's game design was a display of how she used the background knowledge she had of challenge types of games and melded this with her knowledge of the novel to create her own representation of the novel in game form. Jeannette had met Mr. Shelby's expectations of presenting a visual display of the understanding she had of the novel.

She said she had modelled her game on one she had at home. For the game she had to do for The Neverending Story she felt that she would follow the chronology of the story more and include challenges of different strengths, because she had seen that done in someone else's game and thought it was a good idea. Jeannette enjoyed playing these types of games. She felt restricted by Mr. Shelby's approach that they work through each frame of the game in class. She would have liked to have more freedom to work on her own.

> Jeannette: "I don't like working like in a big group sort of doing it step by step. Like I read ahead, in the book and like you want to just get to it right at that moment but you can't."

Jeannette had the background knowledge both in her understanding of the novel and with designing a challenge game and wanted to use it.

Jeannette enjoyed reading The Neverending Story. She liked the way the book switched back and forth between "real" and "not real". "When it switches back like you sort of get your mind off things. You just keep on reading and you can't stop."

Jeannette saw many similarities between the three novels. She saw that they were all fantasies, had similar types of characters, similar elements such as charms and similar character development of the heros. "Taran Wanderer, these two books are sort of closely related because um, Atreyu he has to, like he's trying hard on his mission and Bastian is trying hard too, and Taran he was eager to find out who his parents were, so they all have a certain confidence." Jeannette is demonstrating her use of the background knowledge she gained from reading the first two books, to relate to her understanding of The Neverending Story. The themes Mr. Shelby drew out of the other two novels had helped Jeannette gain greater meaning from this third novel.

She enjoyed reading The Neverending Story because she did not have to struggle with the text and found what she was reading meaningful. This may mean that the author's language was easier to read or that the background knowledge Jeannette had gained from reading the first two novels reduced the uncertainty she had about the text and made comprehension possible.

Curtis

Curtis enjoyed reading fantasy and enjoyed playing challenge type games. He liked The Black Cauldron and usually read much more than the chapter per night assigned by Mr. Shelby.

Curtis: I like action and sometimes I like Judy Blume books. Superfudge and that and I like The Black Cauldron. I like those kinds of books too.

Int: Have you read any other of his books?

Curtis: No, but I read C.S. Lewis. He's awesome. We just about have the whole collection except for one.

When I observed Curtis reading he loved to dramatize his oral reading. When I asked Curtis to explain the meaning of specific passages I had him read to me from Taran Wanderer. He demonstrated a sound understanding of what he was reading. He was able to predict and make inferences from what he had read. He also was able to interpret action taking place in the text and see the implications that action might have for the character. His board game for The Black Cauldron demonstrated an understanding of the elements necessary for a challenge game. He had individual challenge cards, different options players could choose and also a choice of consequences for actions chosen. Curtis also displayed a thorough understanding of the novel and had included key events and characters from the novel. He said he had modelled some parts of his game on video games he played.

Curtis enjoyed reading The Neverending Story. He could see connections between it and the previous two novels. In talking about the main character of The Neverending Story he said "because in Taran Wanderer and The Black Cauldron, Taran's characteristics grow and he becomes like a man and same in The Neverending Story. Atreyu is becoming more manly and so is Bastian." He also identified several elements that were similar for the three stories. Curtis was enjoying making his board game for The Neverending Story and when I last spoke with him had planned how he was going to present the elements of his game. He felt the board game was an enjoyable activity but given another choice of activity, would love to do a play of the The Neverending Story. It seems that Curtis' enjoyment of the activity was directly related to the understanding he had of both the novel and the game making activity. Because he had previous experience with both fantasy and challenge game playing he was able to use his imagination more to get involved with the novel and the game. It was not difficult for Curtis to meet Mr. Shelby's expectations of organizing critical events into a visual form. He had a good understanding of the book so knew what the critical events were. He also was familiar with the visual form of a challenge game because he played them. He was able to "manipulate with his own imagination and create the adventure" because he did not have to struggle with an understanding of what was happening in the novel or with how to construct this type of game. Curtis was a child with a vivid imagination. This coupled with the background experience he had of the topic enabled him to be successful at the activity.

Roxanne

Roxanne had great difficulty reading The Black Cauldron. Her answers to the assigned questions were mostly incorrect and she was unable to reflect on the quotes that were given. When we discussed her progress with the novel she told me, "Well, I didn't really understand it very good."

Int: You didn't? Why do you think that was, Roxanne?

Roxanne: Well, like the way they talked, they talked like its hard to understand sometimes what they talked about.

Int: The language?

Roxanne: Sometimes I read it and I don't understand what's going on.

Roxanne appeared to be struggling with the text of the novel and was unable to get beyond this to gain deeper meaning from what she was reading. She told me she liked reading adventure books and sometimes read high school romances. Observing Roxanne in class I found she was easily distracted and enjoyed talking to her friends and passing notes. Mr. Shelby felt Roxanne was lazy at times and did not put the effort necessary into her work. Roxanne told me that she preferred to read alone and had a hard time concentrating when reading in the classroom situation. Roxanne had not read fantasy literature before reading The Black Cauldron. She lacked the background experience to relate her reading and coupled with the fact that she was struggling with the text comprehensive was extremely difficult for her. Also because she was struggling with the reading she lacked the interest or motivation to read ahead.

Smith (1975) states that what motivates us to read on is our ability to predict and create the desire to answer the questions we have posed. Roxanne lacked this ability to predict because she was struggling with the comprehension sentence by sentence and was not able to grasp the meaning of the whole event or action which would motivate her to read further. When I had Roxanne read to me orally she read well, but was having difficulty inferring or predicting from what she had read. In one chapter she read to me, about Taran's horse being stolen and Taran trying to get it back, she did not understand the significance of the horse's importance to Taran until she came upon the horse's name almost at the end of the chapter. She then was able to understand what she had read before. Although she had read The Black Cauldron and should have known the significance of the horse, she was unable to draw from this past experience. She felt she was able to understand the second book better than The Black Cauldron but it was obvious that she was still having difficulty comprehending what she read.

Int: Who's Melynlas?

Roxanne: That's the horse's name. I must have I thought, that must be his horse, because I remember in the story the horse was named Melynlas.

Int: From this story or in the other?

Roxanne: Even in the other story.

Int: Now what are you thinking?

Roxanne: Okay, I guess the horse went somewhere or someone took it or something. He found it again and um that's ......

Int: Does it make it clearer now that you understand that?

Roxanne: Yup.

Roxanne also had difficulty designing her board game for The Black Cauldron. Her game was a traditional type of game where you rolled the dice and moved ahead according to the roll. It was a flat, one dimensional board game whereas the other students had made theirs three dimensional. She had included only a few elements from the story, probably because she had such difficulty with the story. When I talked to Roxanne about her game she said she had difficulty designing it.

Roxanne: Um, my last one it was pretty hard because I really didn't understand the story so I sort of had to like ....

Int: Fake it?

Roxanne: Ya.

When I asked Roxanne if she played these challenge types of games she had difficulty understanding what I meant. She did not seem to know what a challenge game was. She said she had played Yatzee and Life once. Yatzee is a dice game and Life is a traditional board game. Her experience with board games seemed to be limited.

Roxanne was enjoying reading The Neverending Story. "I like The

Neverending Story because I know what the story is about because I've seen the movie." She also said that she found it easy to read. By this time she had gained confidence in designing a board game and seemed to understand what was expected. I asked her what Mr. Shelby wanted for The Neverending Story board game. She answered: "Well probably the same as with the The Black Cauldron, since we have already done one, like mine will probably be a bit better."

Int: Okay, what are the main things you think he is going to be looking for in your board game?

Roxanne: The way it's set up. Like the roll or the square what it says, what you have to do. If it's real boring you keep going but if it has little sayings and stuff...

Although Roxanne still did not demonstrate a clear understanding of what went into designing a game that would meet Mr. Shelby's expectations, she did seem to feel comfortable with her understanding and felt she could do a better job. From observing and playing the other students' games she had increased her experience with this type of game and now felt more comfortable making her own. She told me about some elements, for example, "the boxes with cards" that other students had used that she would like to include in hers.

NOVEL STUDY SUMMARY

The students who had previous experience reading fantasy literature seemed to experience less difficulty answering the assigned novel study questions. However, all of the students had difficulty reflecting on the assigned quotes. Three of the four informants had difficulty with the language of the first two novels, The Black Cauldron and Taran Wanderer. The four informants found the second novel Taran Wanderer easier to read after having read The Black Cauldron. They thought that this was because they were now familiar with the characters and the style of writing in these two novels. All four informants found The Neverending Story easier to read than The Black Cauldron and Taran Wanderer. With the exception of Travis, they were enjoying reading The Neverending Story more than they had The Black Cauldron and Taran Wanderer. Class discussions were livelier and most of the students were participating and answering questions.

The experience they had gained from the first two assigned novels seemed to have provided background knowledge with fantasy literature that enabled them to see common elements and themes in the three novels. They also were more experienced with the format of instruction Mr. Shelby followed.

The students who played challenge types of games had less difficulty designing their own game than those who did not play them. Once the students had gained experience designing the initial board game for The Black Cauldron they were more confident about designing a second game for The Neverending Story. The students gained experience from the other students' games and indicated they were going to use ideas from other students' games for their own games. The students who actively played role playing and challenge types of games drew from this experience and designed their games to include elements from the games they had played. Some of the students did not want to follow Mr. Shelby's design for the board game for The Neverending Story. They preferred to create their own type of game. Some students wanted to do a role playing game or use a different format than that suggested by Mr. Shelby.

WRITING ACTIVITIES

It was through the writing activities that I was best able to view how the children were using their background knowledge to complete the assigned tasks. I was also able to observe the types of background knowledge the students were using. I collected samples of three different writing activities and formally interviewed the informants about their work. The four writing assignments were assigned at the beginning, middle and end of my observation period which gave me the opportunity to observe some of the growth that was taking place in the students' writing.

RAP POEMS

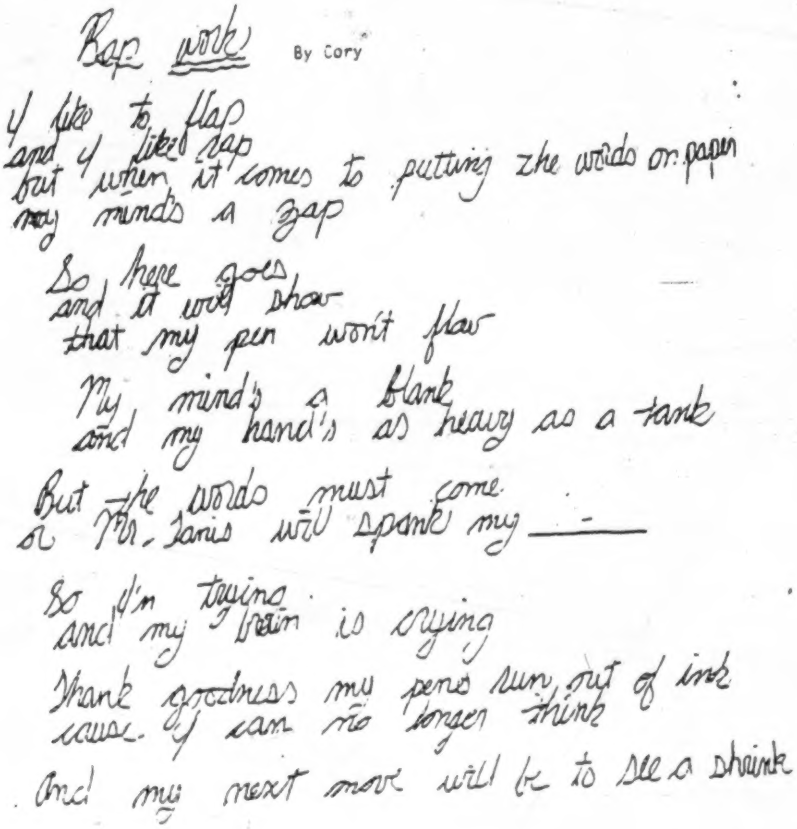
The first writing assignment I collected was a rap poem Mr. Shelby had assigned. I did not observe the instructions that had been given to the students as I had not yet entered the field. I observed the students presenting their finished product. I collected the samples from my four informants as well as from the rest of the class. Having just entered the field I was interested in observing the quality of work that the grade six class produced. In regards to internal validity I wanted to see how my informants' work compared with the other students in the class and I was able to check whether their work was a representative sample of the class as a whole. As a way to gain entry with the students I also decided to interview some of the other students in the class about their raps.

I was totally unfamiliar with rap as a form of musical expression. This assignment had been given as part of the song writing unit they were working on with Mr. Shelby in music. Some of the elements of song writing that Mr. Shelby worked on were the creation of rhythm patterns, starting a lyric, use of figurative language and use of repetition in a song. Instruction in the different elements of song writing included learning the appropriate terminology for each element. Mr. Shelby's explanation for doing raps was

> "...in music we study music theory and show them note value, and in doing that we have to program the computer and they program in drum patterns. They make an orchestral background for singing and now in language arts what we do we attempt to use these and they build the right rhythm poems raps and they perform them. Ah, we've tried to put that together with the rhythm machine but their rhythms break down. But we do rhythm poems to build on this and connect the two together." (Interview data, October 25).

His explanation to the class for doing raps was: "I would like to remind you why we are doing them. Number one we are doing them because I feel its a way to teach language; instill in you the love of words the flow of words, the strength and the rhythm of words, put in certain repetitious patterns."

I collected samples of all of the students' work and chose some examples other than that of the four informants. I based my choice on originality of topic and interviewed these students as well as the key informants about their work. Some of the students had previous experience with raps and some had not. It seemed that those who had the experience either listening to or writing rap, found the task easier to do. Cory wrote about having trouble writing a rap and when I asked him why he chose this topic, he told me his mom helped him because he was having trouble (see Figure 3).



Rap work By Cory

I like to flap
and I liked rap
but when it comes to putting the words on paper
my mind's a zap

So here goes
and it will show
that my pen won't flow

My mind's a blank
and my hand's as heavy as a tank

But the words must come
or Mr. Tanis will spank my ___

So I'm trying
and my brain is crying
Thank goodness my pen's run out of ink
cause I can no longer think
And my next move will be to see a shrink

FIGURE 3. Cory's Rap Poem

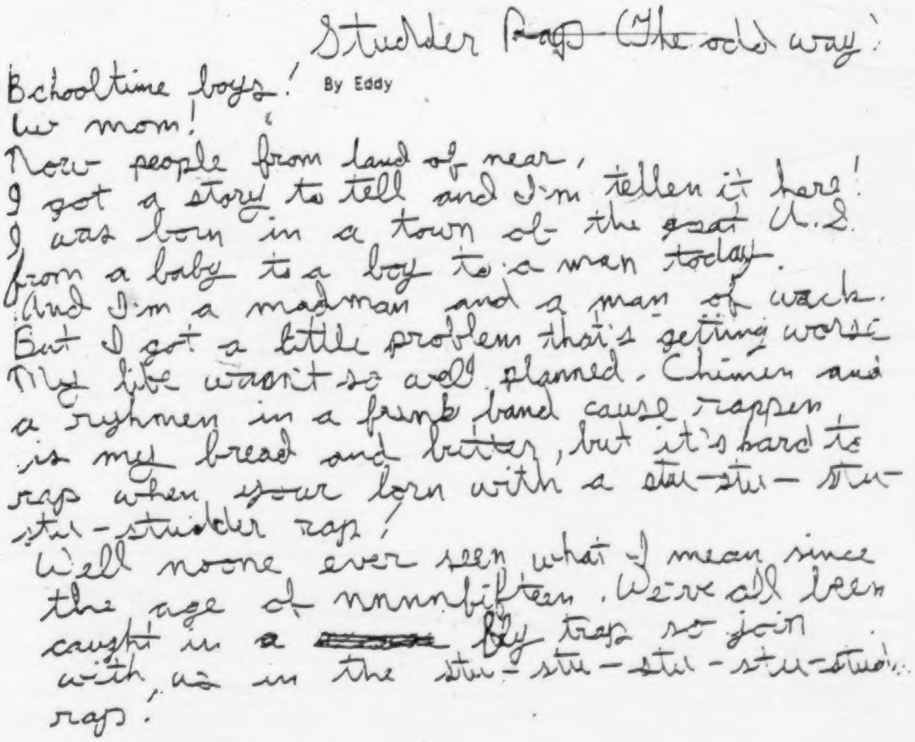
Cory: Cause I haven't wrote any rap poems before. This is the first one I've done so I just...

Int: Then mom sort of gave you some suggestions?

Cory: Ya.

He was familiar with rap because he told me he listened to rap at home. He had three tapes of it.

Eddy wrote his rap about stuttering because he had heard an original version and he liked it, so he changed some things to make it his own (see Figure 4).



Studder ~~Rap (The~~ old way)

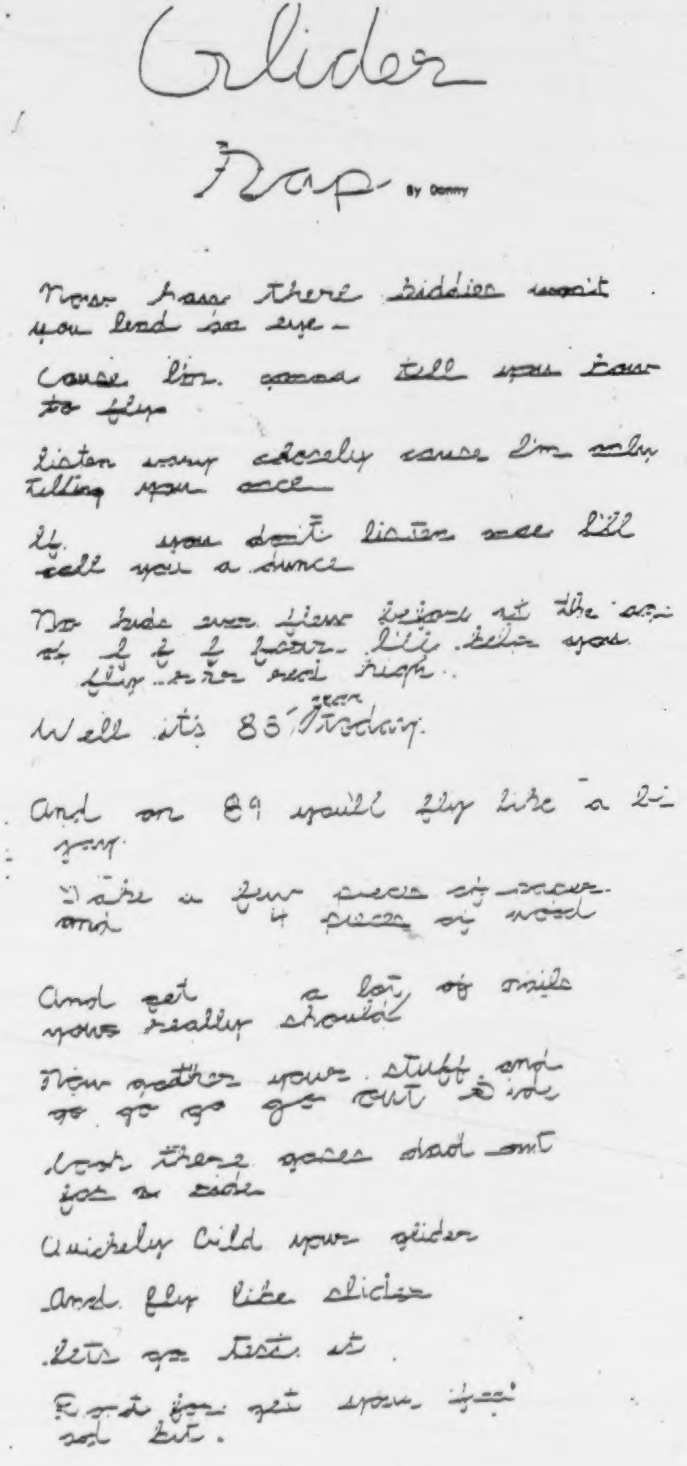
Bchooltime boys! By Eddy
bw mom!
Now people from land of near,
I got a story to tell and I'm tellen it here!
I was born in a town of the ~~great~~ U.S.
from a baby to a boy to a man ~~today~~.
And I'm a madman and a man of wack.
But I got a little problem that's getting worse
My life wasn't so well planned. Chimen and
a ryhmen in a funk band cause rappen
is my bread and butter, but it's hard to
rap when ~~your~~ born with a stu-stu- stu-
stu-studder rap!
Well noone ever seen what I mean since
the age of nnnnfifteen. We've all been
caught in a [illegible] big trap so join
with us in the stu-stu-stu-stu-stud..
rap!

FIGURE 4. Eddy's Rap Poem

Donny wrote his rap about a glider because he had seen a show on T.V. about making gliders "except they were made of metal." He changed his to being made out of wood. He says he put in the word slider because it comes from the movie Top Gun with Tom Cruise "where the guy's name is Slider. Donny likes raps and has tapes at home. He sometimes also likes to write his own. He thought this was fun to do (see Figure 5).

Jeannette

Jeannette wrote her rap while watching a hockey game. She found it a bit hard to do because "she doesn't listen to rap that much and isn't that familiar with it." She said she chose to write about herself because her sister listens to rap and makes them up about her to tease her. I observed Jeannette perform her rap in class and she was rather shy doing this. Mr. Shelby had the class find examples of certain rhythm patterns in Jeannette's rap and had her add a few more syllables to keep the rhythm going (see Figure 6).



Glider

Rap By Donny

Now have there kiddies wait
you lend an eye –

Cause I'm gonna tell you how
to fly

Listen very closely cause I'm only
telling you once

If you don't listen once I'll
call you a dunce

No kids ever flew before at the ag-
e of 1 2 3 four. lil. kids you
fly . . . so real high.

Well its 85 year today.

And on 89 you'll fly like a bl-
jay.

Take a few piece of paper
and 4 piece of wood

And get a lot of nails
yous really should

Now gather your stuff and
go go go go out side

Look there goes dad out
for a ride

Quickely bild your glider

And fly like slider

Lets go test it

[illegible] you get your [illegible]
sad bit.

FIGURE 5. Donny's Rap Poem

Jeannette's Rap Poem

Hey everybody.
I know the ropes
And I know the old
guy named the Pope.
I know I'm cool.
That's no doubt
And I also know
what you're about.
I know I'm number one.
And always all the time.
have exciting fun.
So I'll be me and
you be you.
I hope you stay away,
Every single day.
Because I'll hit you and
tease you and throw you
out of place.
I am very tough and I'll
rip off your face.
Life can wiggle, and waddle,
and leap.
So don't mess with me,
And then you'll see.
So eat my dust.
And if you must.
You must trust.
A cool person.
known as me!

FIGURE 6. Jeannette's Rap Poem

Curtis

Curtis told me he wrote his rap because he was thinking about a guy called the Boss from World Federation Wrestling. He put in Copper Crazy from the song California Crazy that he liked. He said he already knew what rap was before Mr. Shelby gave him the assignment and he didn't find it hard to do. Curtis put on quite a performance when he presented it to the class. He put in actions and mouth sounds as special effects. He may have been modelling the behaviour of others he has seen performing raps. He told me this was his favorite activity (see Figure 7).

Curtis: Number 1 is song writing.

Int: What does he get you to do with that?

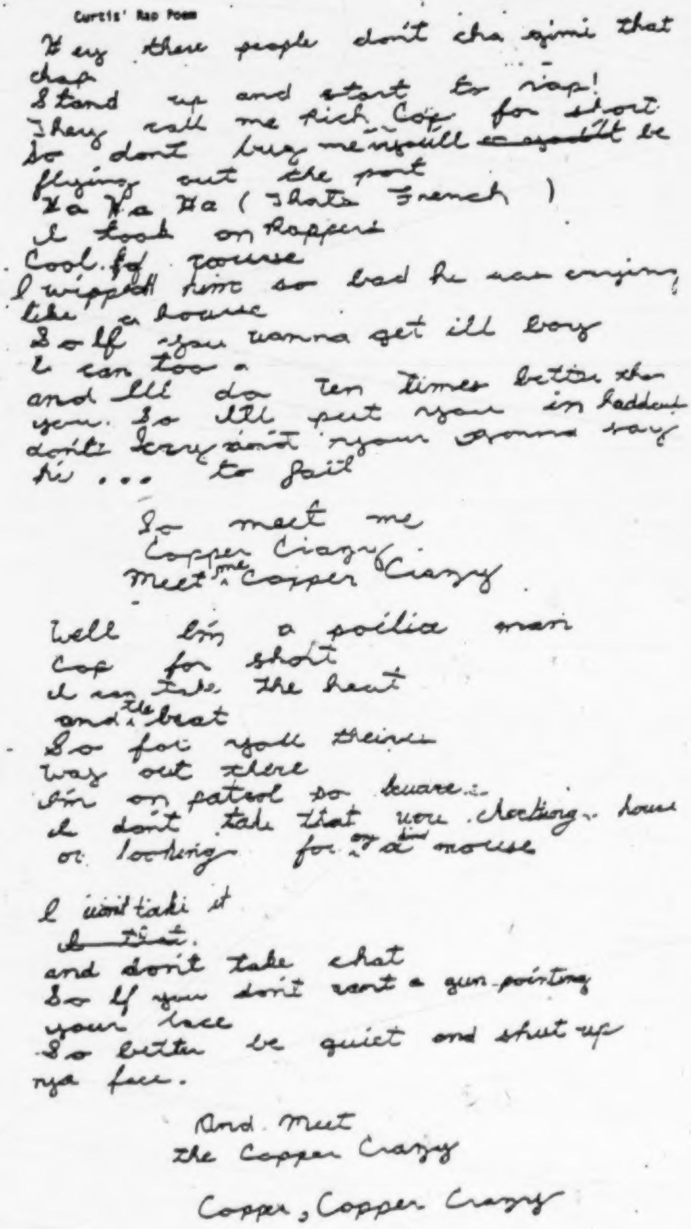
Curtis: Well you write the lyrics and you do something with the synthesizer.

Int: How do you get your melody and that?

Curtis: Cause it was raps you don't really need it.

Int: Raps, right, and you enjoyed it?

Curtis: Ya.



Curtis' Rap Poem

Hey there people don't cha gimi that
chap
Stand up and start to rap!
They call me Rich Cop for short
So dont bug me youll ~~so you~~'ll be
flying out the port
Ha Ha Ha (Thats French)
I took on Rappers
Cool.fof course
I wipped him so bad he was crying
like a horse
So If you wanna get ill boy
I can too a
and Ill do ten times better than
you. So Ill put you in laddat
dont Izzy aint your gonna say
hi . . . to fail

So meet me
Copper Crazy
Meet me Copper Crazy

Well Im a poilia man
Cop for short
I can take the heat
and the beat
So for yall theives
way out there
Im on patrol so beware
I dont take that you clocking house
or looking for a mouse

I wont take it
~~I that~~.
and dont take chat
So If you dont want a gun pointing
your face
So better be quiet and shut up
ya face.

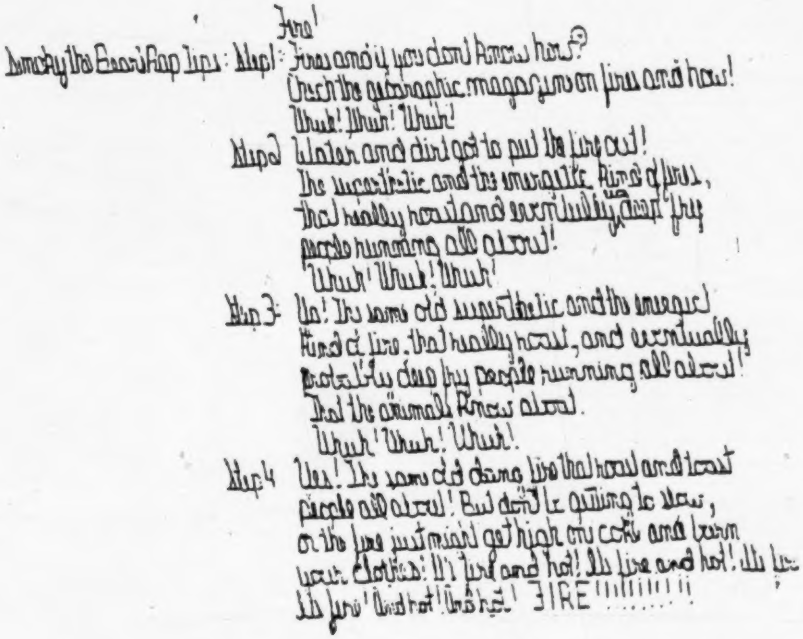
And Meet
the Copper Crazy

Copper, Copper Crazy

FIGURE 7. Curtis' Rap Poem

Travis

Travis also said he had previous knowledge of rap. He had listened to some before. He chose to write about a fire because he wanted to make fun of Earl, the Soul Singer's song about camping that was popular on one of the local radio stations. He put in geographic magazines because that's a common magazine people use to get information. He said he likes humour which is why he made this a funny rap (see Figure 8).

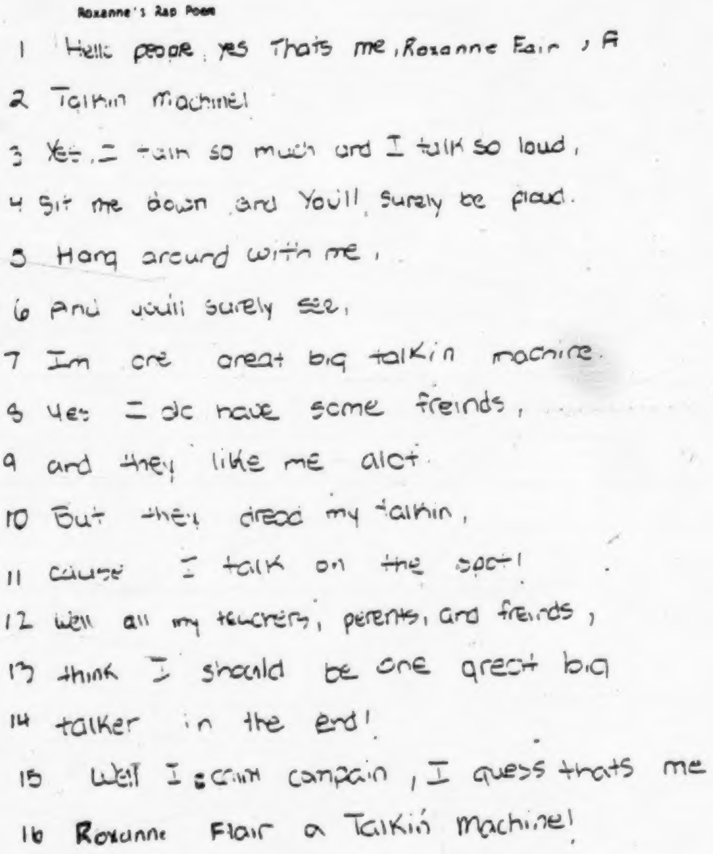


Fire!
Smokey the Bear's Rap Tips: Step 1: Fires and if you don't know how?
Check the geographic magazines on fires and how!
Whuh! Whuh! Whuh!
Step 2 Water and dirt got to put the fire out!
The [illegible] and the [illegible] kind of fires,
that really roast and eventually drive the
people running all about!
Whuh! Whuh! Whuh!
Step 3: Yo! The same old [illegible] and the [illegible]
kind of fire. that really roast, and eventually
probably drive the people running all about!
That the animals know about.
Whuh! Whuh! Whuh!
Step 4 Yes! The same old dame fire that roast and toast
people all about! But don't be quitting to slow,
or the fire just might get high on coke and burn
your clothes! It's fire and hot! It's fire and hot! It's fire
It's fire! And hot! And hot! FIRE!!!!!!!!!!

FIGURE 8. Travis' Rap Poem

Roxanne

Roxanne wrote about herself as a talking machine because of a previous assignment that had been given. The students had to describe someone in the class and the class had to guess who it was. The person who described her had described someone who never stopped talking and the class guessed it was Roxanne right away. Roxanne thought this was funny so did a rap about herself as a talker. She did not tell me whether or not she had any previous experience with raps but said she had fun doing this assignment and found it easy (see Figure 9).



Roxanne's Rap Poem

1 Hello peope; yes Thats me, Roxanne Fair , A
2 Talkin machine!
3 Yes, I talk so much and I talk so loud,
4 Sit me down and You'll surely be proud.
5 Hang around with me,
6 And you'll surely see,
7 Im one great big talkin machine.
8 Yes I do have some freinds,
9 and they like me alot.
10 But they dread my talkin,
11 cause I talk on the spot!
12 Well all my teachers, perents, and freinds,
13 think I should be one great big
14 talker in the end!
15 Well I [illegible] campain, I guess thats me
16 Roxanne Flair a Talkin machine!

FIGURE 9. Roxanne's Rap Poem

DESCRIPTIVE HORROR WRITING

The second writing assignment I collected and talked to the students about was a piece of descriptive horror writing. Mr. Shelby had read an excerpt from Salem's Lot a Stephen King novel, as an example of this type of writing. His intent was to get the students to work on developing their descriptive writing skills. "What I tried to stress was how you prove that the scene is scary not by just saying it was a scary scene. You use descriptive language to prove it."

The students appeared to enjoy this activity and most of them watched horror movies quite frequently or had some previous experience with the type of writing they were expected to do. I collected copies of all the students' work and formally interviewed several additional students, besides the key informants, about their writing. Movies and T.V. shows were frequently referred to as sources of ideas for story writing. With the exception of Jeannette, the difficulty students had with their writing seemed to be with the actual mechanics of writing rather than from lack of experience with horror stories. Mr. Shelby's reading of the excerpt from Stephen King's book also helped familiarize students with the type of writing Mr. Shelby expected. Some students referred to it when discussing where they got their ideas from.

Curtis

Curtis had a good sense of story and demonstrated his knowledge of creating suspense. He built on this suspense throughout his story. He demonstrated an ability to plan events in the story so they would build suspense. He also showed an understanding of the elements of a story as a whole and worked towards building meaning in the context of the whole story. Curtis' writing ability was more advanced than the other students. He was aware of the process he had to go through to be a good writer and said he modelled his work on other authors. The other students did not demonstrate this maturity with their writing and were mostly concerned with the immediate task and worked on writing the small portion they were assigned, ignoring the larger story. Curtis understood how his description could be developed into a larger story.

Curtis is demonstrating how he uses his background knowledge of story writing when engaged in a writing task. Because he has a well developed background of writing experience he is able to articulate how and why he includes certain elements in his story. His writing ability is more advanced than the other students because he brings a greater depth of background knowledge in this area to the writing task.

Curtis' story and complete transcript of the interview with Curtis are included in Appendix A.

Jeannette

Jeannette didn't like horror movies or horror stories. She said she didn't watch them or read books about them. She found the excerpt from Stephen King's book that Mr. Shelby read too bloody and gory. Jeannette was alone at home a lot because her parents worked, so she had experienced the feeling of imaginary things being in the house which is why she included these elements in her story. She chose to write about being at a sleep over because she had done this once with some friends. They had stayed up all night talking, and the grasshoppers made too much noise for them to sleep when they finally went to bed. Because Jeannette did not have a thorough background knowledge of horror stories she used her own personal experiences. These experiences were modified and put in the story. What she considered to be a scary experience was based on her own personal experience.

To her, having someone in the house when she was alone was a very frightening thought. She told me that sometimes when she was alone she imagined a ghost-like character coming from the basement and going upstairs. When I asked her to describe him, she told me he was part black and part white, like a character she had read about in a book. She said it was not evil and not good, but in-between. Jeannette completed the writing task but her story did not meet Mr. Shelby's expectations of a scary descriptive paragraph, she did not have the background knowledge of descriptive horror writing to draw from, so what she had written reflected her own personal experiences which in her mind were scary. Jeannette's story and the complete transcript of the interview with Jeannette are included in Appendix A.

Travis

Travis based his story on a role playing game he had at home. He wanted to get the reader to be the character, "like you do when you play role playing games" which is why he wrote in the present tense. He said he chose someone with pyjamas because there was a character in a GERP story that wears pyjamas. He chose the vampire character from the Stephen King story. The reason there were flattened bullets was because they don't harm vampires and go right through them, he said. He had the girl use a wooden stick because wood does double damage. It can kill and is particularly useful against vampires. He says he knew this because he had an encyclopedia of facts about these subjects and looked it up. Travis did not do well on his story for Mr. Shelby and felt it was because he had difficulty with his handwriting. The difficulty seemed to be in the actual mechanics of writing. He had difficultly expressing what he knew in a form that was acceptable to Mr. Shelby. (Travis' story and complete transcript of the interview are included in Appendix A).

Roxanne

Roxanne got her idea for her story from a T.V. movie she had seen. She couldn't remember the name. She described her character as being tall and wearing a black leather jacket. She chose black because black was "sort of evil." She chose to have the girl's throat slit because she wanted to make it gross, like the movie, and because Mr. Shelby had read the Stephen King book which made her think about making it gross. Roxanne's story was not evaluated highly by Mr. Shelby. This may have been because the mechanics of her story needed work. She had not done a revised copy to correct spelling mistakes (see Appendix A).

BULLY STORY

As part of The Neverending Story novel study the students were given a writing assignment about being bullied or being a bully. Mr. Shelby assigned this topic to get the students to identify with the main character who had run away from school because he was being bullied. He read an article to them from Reader's Digest about the consequences later in life for people who were bullied or had been bullied . There was lively discussion in class about their own experiences. Many students shared stories of what had happened to them before they wrote their assignments. It was obvious from the discussion that students could draw from past experiences to write their stories. Mr. Shelby also gave very explicit directions on the overhead for what he wanted included in their story.

I did not observe any students having difficulty writing during the time I was in the classroom. I interviewed the informants to see if they felt the story had helped them identify with the main character. I wanted to see if they were able to relate what they were reading to their personal experiences.

Curtis

Curtis had written about being a bully at school, and his realization of what this had done to his victims. He did not feel this story had helped him identify with Bastian, the main character of The Neverending Story, because Bastian had not really been bullied. Curtis felt Bastian talked about it but he didn't feel it was too bad.

Int: I read about you being a bully. Did you think it helped you identify with that character at all by doing that work?

Curtis: Not really.

Int: No, why do you say that?

Curtis: Well, by doing that work, cause I don't know, cause Bastian wasn't a bully.

Int: Okay, but he was being bullied.

Curtis: Well, the thing I wrote about it wasn't about that. It was more like, how its weird because you think you aren't a bully but people who you are bugging they must see you as a bully. In grade four I understood that but I didn't understand that in grade three.

Int: And you didn't think that helped you to understand what Bastian was going through being bullied? It didn't help you connect with him at all?

Curtis: Well Bastian, he didn't well, he worried about the bullies but he didn't total freak out but some of the kids we used to bug, they hated us.

Curtis didn't relate his experience to Bastian because he didn't actually read about one of Bastian's bullying experiences. In the story it just described how Bastian hated the bullies but it doesn't describe the actual scene of him being bullied. Curtis doesn't believe Bastian is truly being bullied and because he doesn't have this belief, he can't relate the two situations. If the author had been more convincing in his description of how Bastian felt about being bullied I believe Curtis may have been able to relate his own experience to that of Bastian's. Curtis demonstrated a good understanding of what it meant to be bullied but was unable to sympathize with Bastian because he did not feel Bastian had been bullied. This may be because Curtis' previous experience is that of a bully and not of being bullied (see Appendix B).

Jeannette

Jeannette had written about her experience of being bullied in a park by some kids she didn't know. She felt this story helped her understand the main character of The Neverending Story better.

Jeannette: "Well, it really helps you to know how he feels and like, if you've been bullied you'll automatically know how he felt and you'll understand what you are doing, and if you're reading a book and he says he's being bullied, like two times, not a lot like he is, but you could understand more about him."

Int: Do you think that's why Mr. Shelby had you write this for him?

Jeannette: (nods yes) (see Appendix B).

Travis

Travis wrote about an experience he had at his language school when he was bullied in the hall (see Appendix B). He felt that doing this writing assignment helped him identify with the main character.

Travis: Ya,I used to be in his place a couple of times.

Int: Did that help you talking about it and thinking about it? Why did Mr. Shelby give it to you to do?

Travis: Well to understand. I guess how that boy, how he felt

> and I guess I think I don't know how we should handle it if we get in that situation if it happens to us.

THE NEVERENDING STORY ADVENTURE

For the fourth writing assignment I collected samples of the students work and also discussed their writing with them (see Appendix C for stories, and transcripts of interviews). They were required to write an adventure that could be added to the adventures described in The Neverending Story. In the novel there is reference made to adventures that have taken place but are not written in as part of the story. Mr. Shelby wanted the students to write these stories for the author. When I asked the informants what direction Mr. Shelby has given to them they said that it had to be 1000 words and no dialogue was to be used. They were to follow the story format of a beginning, middle and end.

At this point the students had read many of the adventures in the novel and had these to model their stories on. Mr. Shelby was very impressed with the work. The students' writing ability had improved greatly. Through our discussions about their stories, the informants revealed how they were using the background knowledge they had gained by reading the novel and the two novels that preceeded it. They also displayed the use of personal and vicarious experience with which they were making connections through their writing. Jeannette had included in her story elements from a horror movie she had seen. She also described an experience in a supermarket which she had personally experienced. Curtis described Atreyu's awakening as he personally had experienced it when getting up to write the assigned story. He also had included characters and events from comics he read and games he had played.

Travis

I questioned Travis as to why he chose to introduce his writing in the manner he had written (see Appendix C for copy of Travis' story and complete transcript of interview.)

Travis: I just want to give them an introduction on how, like an introduction. The stories I read usually have small bits of the story and a title page and you get the table of contents.

Int: Yes, but the author usually in the story doesn't identify himself. I'm, whose the author of The Neverending Story: I'm Michael Ende and I want to tell you about the story. So why do you do it that way?

Travis: Well, its just my introduction.

Int: So you want your audience to know that you're the one telling the story, that's important to you?

Travis: Well, no, cause just a while ago Mr. Shelby told us about fifty lines, fifty words of introduction, so that's it.

Travis' understanding of an introduction was not the same as Mr. Shelby's. He thought he had to take on a role and introduce the story, rather than do so through the writing of the story.

Travis found the adventures in The Neverending Story too long and boring at times, which is why he chose to write a humorous adventure.

Travis: I wanted to put some humour into it because I thought this story would be real boring.

Int: Now why a giant yo yo? What made you decide on your main character to be a yo yo?

Travis: You see again humour. This is real boring, 1000 words, I don't know.

Int: Why do you think it's boring?

Travis: Too long and then the same characters and what the topic is. I couldn't really find a good topic to start on. That's why I wanted to add a lot of humour to it.

Travis added humorous scenes and characters to his story. His ideas of using humour showed that he knew how to change a situation from serious to humorous by altering characters or situations of writing. He also included things from his personal experience such as the ice palace from West Edmonton Mall. He altered elements from the story to suit his own ideas, such as the yo yo "instead of a giant spider with a whole bunch of blue hornets all over," or a griffin instead of a luck dragon. "In the story there was a luck dragon. Well I have a griffin." He draws from vicarious experiences including different traps for the main characters which he took from an Indiana Jones movie. Although Travis didn't feel he had a good topic to write about, his work pleased Mr. Shelby. Mr. Shelby felt Travis had done a lot of work and planning for his story and had done a good job. Travis displayed a good understanding of what went into an adventure of this type. Although his story was humorous, his main character was involved in a quest. Travis displayed his knowledge of the story through the type of characters he had chosen and by the types of elements he included.

His story was a meld of elements of previous adventure stories read and the knowledge he had gained from reading this novel.

Roxanne

Roxanne chose to write an adventure about the main character's quest for love (see Appendix C). She did this because other students in the class had done so. Her story demonstrated that she understood the basic elements of an adventure, modelled on those she had read in the novel.

Roxanne felt she had written a good story. Mr. Shelby felt it was too short and that she did not develop it well enough. Roxanne's story revealed that she had the background knowledge to write an adventure of the same style as the book but was lacking the details to meet the length requirement that Mr. Shelby had requested.

Roxanne had built on the theme of Bastián being without love as a major cause of his actions, which demonstrated an understanding of this theme in the novel. Her inability to meet the conditions Mr. Shelby set out may be due to a failure on her part to add details to develop her adventure, which indicated difficulty with the format or style of writing an adventure story.

Curtis

Curtis wrote a five part adventure entitled The Five Amulets (see

Appendix C). Through his writing he displayed an understanding of adventure, the novel and good story telling abilities. His writing reveals that he has drawn from a variety of background experiences.

His opening paragraph was quite descriptive and he told me he did it for a special reason. "That's how I felt when I woke up. Like Atreyu. I jumped up to do the story I felt powerful. I jumped out of bed, opened the window, opened the door, closed it again and that's how it looked when I was looking out the window."

I talked to him about some of the details he had included and his explanations were quite revealing.

Int: Why castle nightmare?

Curtis: Oh, I got that off a book I read about castle nightmare. Well it wasn't castle nightmare, it was castle something may be it wasn't nightmare. I know that it was a Stephen King book, or Steven King or Stephen Jackson.

Int: Mountains, inferno?

Curtis: The inferno's from my comics. I pretty well got this story from my comics from and X Factor and all that about an inferno.

Int: Dark Child?

Curtis: Dark Child, golden child and you know the Eddie Murphy movie and also there's a new mutant devil child....

Int: The quest for the five amulets? Why five amulets? Why did you pick that? Because there was an amulet in the story?

Curtis: On, no, remember my Super Wonder Boy, well he just goes around, he collects. He doesn't collect amulets. He just, goes a few places and has to kill these demons and stuff. So I just thought he had to get amulets from.....Its kind of like Wonder Boy.

Curtis: Do you know why George?

Int: Why?

Curtis: Because at night, this is really interesting, when I go to sleep like, the light shines in my basement window and I'm all by myself in the basement. My dad hasn't put a door in yet. He first built it, right. Well, I'm sleeping there and this light shines on my posters and it looks like a skeleton in the dark. You can't see anything but the light and it looks like a skeleton and I used to be really scared. Then later I go, the only way I'm going to conquer, I go, hi George I made that name up, George, so I added it in the story.

Int: Why do you write this way? Do you model yourself after anyone?

Curtis: Oh yes, definitely.

Int: Did you follow anything or copy anything? Have an idea that I want it to be like this book?

Curtis: Well I'm kind of like George Lucas. He puts in so many ideas just in one. Millions of ideas just in one thing...

Int: Bone Crusher?

Curtis: Bone Crusher is a guy from inferno.

Int: A comic?

Curtis: Inferno was a thing that had happened and it was in X Factor comics.

Int: Now in The Neverending Story Atreyu can't really use his power. He's not allowed to use the amulet. Does he have a sword in it or not?

Curtis: (shakes head, no).

Int: No, he doesn't use weapons or anything. Now why did you decide to have Atreyu different here?

Curtis: Well, I kind of like those kinds of quests. You know Dungeons and Dragons? There's always weapons and stuff.

These examples reveal that Curtis was able to draw from a variety of background experiences and transform these experiences into a coherent story. The activity was interesting for him because he could draw from the many different areas of background knowledge he possessed.

Jeannette

Jeannette also drew from many different areas of background knowledge. For her story see Appendix C.

Int: What made you think of writing this way, that he had a father, that had died. Did you get that idea from anything?

Jeannette: I wanted to, like, in the real book the mother died and I didn't want that.

Int: And he enjoyed novels with action and fantasy. Does that come from Bastian liking to read that sort of thing, or yourself?

Jeannette: Myself.

Int: He found something. Why did you decide on a bottle here?

Jeannette: Oh, like, in some shows they have a bottle with a note inside.

Int: Why did you decide that everyone in Fantastica would be mean and evil?

Jeannette: Well, for one thing I planned it out at the beginning so that I would have an easy ending and my story, like, when they're evil you see later on it was by some fault. From a certain fault and then he had to find the Childlike Empress and Atreyu and that's why they are mean but they used to be nice.

Int: The cow section? Is that what you call it?

Jeannette: Well, I like some comedy, I say to my mom I'll meet you in the cow section.

Int: He felt a wierd feeling. Now why did you decide to do it this way?

Jeannette: Well, I like, wanted a way for him to get into the story, into Fantastic, so he walks home and he hears sounds. He sort of goes through a time zone or something and he doesn't realize it until some people call a different name.

Int: Now your idea, would that have come from how Bastian entered the story?

Jeannette: You know how Bastian sees himself reading a book in there but I like him to do much more. So I put Atreyu to be in Fantastica so he could help Fantastica.

It was interesting that Jeannette puts Atreyu in Fantastica to do more. What she had done with her story was what actually happened to Bastian, the main character in The Neverending Story. Jeannette had not read this far in the novel yet but had anticipated through her own story what the solution for the novel was.

Int: Why did you choose Oklahoma?

Jeannette: I just, well it's matched with the scene. It seemed like a good place to put him in so....

Int: Where have you heard of Oklahoma?

Jeannette: It's in the States, and I've always wanted to visit too.

Int: Then he goes to find a lady in a black cape. Now why did you put her in a black cape, Jeannette?

Jeannette: Well, I sometimes watch movies and they have a woman usually, and sometimes horror and she turns around in a black cape and it sort of gets to you.

Int: This is a happy ending. So he woke up from his sleep. Was he really dreaming?

Jeannette: I'm not really sure no more because he was in reality but after that I guess Atreyu put him to sleep so that he would wake up in a happy ending.

It was interesting that Jeannette seemed to have lost control of the writing. She was so involved with the story that she didn't realize it was she who wrote the character's actions and not the character itself.

Int: And why did you go to a church Jeannette?

Jeannette: Well, I watched a horror movie this weekend and in order to get rid of him they used holy water, so why not use that?

Mr. Shelby was very pleased with Jeannette's story. She demonstrated an ability to plan and develop a story, as well as use the background knowledge she had, to provide interesting detail.

I did not observe any time when Mr. Shelby would work with the students individually on the mechanics of their writing. When I asked him about this he told me that when he marked the students' work he would record examples of errors which were put on the board. I observed one lesson where this took place and the students were struggling to correct the examples given. The students were not very interested in the work and seemed to lack the rules of grammar necessary to correct the errors that were pointed out to them. This also may be that the examples were out of the context of the story and the students were unable to understand the errors being made.

This seems to indicate that whatever writing the students did was based on the knowledge they already had about style and technique that they brought to the writing task. If their writing experiences were well developed, such as Curtis', they did not experience any difficulty expressing their ideas. If their writing experiences were limited they did not receive the mediation necessary for them to develop further and were evaluated on whatever experience they were able to use to complete the task. In many cases this was not of the standard Mr. Shelby expected.

The only other lesson I observed which involved writing mechanics was a lesson on the different parts of speech. A sentence was put on the overhead projector and the students had to label the different parts as nouns, adjectives, adverbs etc. Mr. Shelby then asked each student to number their pages from one to twenty and asked for an example of each part of speech he listed. When this was completed he read the beginning part of a story and the students were to fill in missing parts with their examples. The result was a silly story. The students enjoyed this activity and requested to do more after the first one had been done.

SUMMARY OF WRITING ACTIVITIES

It was through the writing activities that most was revealed about the background knowledge students were bringing to the tasks. The students were instructed on what to write but how they did their writing was left up to them. They received no instruction or assistance on the writing process. When I interviewed the students about their writing The students revealed that they drew from personal experiences that had happened to them, vicarious experience which included movies they had seen, books they had read, songs they had heard, and instructional experience where they were drawing from knowledge they had acquired during the course of instruction in class. Some of the students were able to articulate better than others where their ideas had come from and their explanations revealed a lot about how they were making connections between the writing tasks and their background knowledge.

Most of the students were able to do the writing assignments with little difficulty. The rap poems seemed to cause the most problems for those students who were not familiar with rap. For some students the difficulty arose because they had never written a rap poem before even though they had listened to them. Most of the students were enthusiastic about writing about bullying situations because they could relate the task to personal experiences. The experience of being bullied or being a bully was familiar to them. When I observed the instructional portion of this assignment, the students were eager to share their stories orally and Mr. Shelby had to work at getting them settled into writing as they were so eager to tell their stories orally. The adventure story that the students wrote to add to The Neverending Story also seemed to interest the students. Many of the students wrote very lengthy adventures that demonstrated their understanding of the type of adventure that would be part of the novel. They drew from their knowledge of fantasy built up from reading the three novels and included elements they were familiar with from those novels in their own stories. Some of the students chose to take situations they were familiar with from the three novels they had read, and alter them in some way to make them their own situations in their stories. They were transforming and melding what they had learned to fit with the background knowledge they already possessed. Travis' use of humour in his story was an example of this type of melding.

MEMORY WORK

Mr. Shelby was "a firm believer that memory work [and by this he meant recitation] is the foundation of the English language and English literature." He said he had done a lot of reading on the value of memory work and was convinced there was a lot of good derived from memory work. Mr. Shelby felt that when students memorize they "have a kindred spirit with the piece." I observed the students performing two pieces. The poem 'I'm Nobody' and Mark Anthony's funeral speech about Ceasar. Most of the students really enjoyed performing and dramatized their performances. Mr. Shelby was supportive when they performed. He encouraged and helped out the students who were presenting to the class. The students also supported each other with clapping and words of encouragement. Roxanne and Curtis both expressed the enjoyment they got from doing this type of activity. Curtis told me making speeches was one of his favourite activities.

Int: Oh you really like that the memory work?

Curtis: When I read that speech, the one that Anthony did, I went "Friends radical dudes and totally cool dudes."

Int: Oh you did your own. He let you?

Curtis: Ya, It went along with the words. I went along with the main ideas.

Mr. Shelby told me that he had been quite impressed with Curtis's performance. He did not explain what it was about Curtis' performance that pleased him. It could have been because it was yet another example of Curtis' unique display of character or because Curtis' had taken the initiative to make the speech his own. It could also have been Curtis' acting. Mr. Shelby was impressed with Curtis' acting ability and had given him a part in the school play. Curtis was very pleased with this accomplishment as these parts were usually reserved for junior high students.

Roxanne also said that she liked the speech because she enjoyed the acting. The success of this activity seemed to lie with the warm supportive non threatening environment that the students performed in. Mr. Shelby was involved with drama, putting on a major school performance each year. Some of the students were involved in the play. They saw the value Mr. Shelby placed on dramatic activities and this seemed to create a non-threatening environment to perform in. Even those students who were a bit shy in performing did not display reluctance to take their turn.

MEMORY WORK SUMMARY

The fact that the children got to act seemed to be what the students enjoyed most about this activity.The students were comfortable taking the risk of getting up in front of the class to recite because they were secure that they would be supported by Mr. Shelby and their peers. Many of the students enjoyed having the opportunity to ham it up and use some of the dramatic skills they had. The class seemed to really enjoy this activity. There was a lot of laughter and cheering, evidence that the students were having fun during this activity. Mr. Shelby chose to do memory work because he felt it instilled in the students a love of words and helped them see the power of words. I did not see evidence of this occurring.

ETYMOLOGY

A daily activity that was carried out in the class was the study of word roots. Along with this the students were exposed to the history of the English language. Mr. Shelby's reason for doing this activity was "I like to give them insights into words, where words come from so that words are making sense." He felt that in giving the students insights into words it would instill in them a love of language and help them see that words were fun. The students were given a list of words. They copied the list of words and were given a set of sentences. They filled in the right word in the context of the sentence.

Int: Okay, and then you work on it during the week?

Mr. Shelby: Right we banter back and forth. For example I've got sort of a morbid corner in my classroom and I'll say isn't that morbid or some student says a joke and its kind of off colour and I'll say is that a morbid joke, so we'll play with words throughout the year.

When I asked Mr. Shelby if he noticed an increase in the students' vocabulary, he said his students who graduated come back and tell him they found the word roots useful to help understand new words. Because they knew what the root was they were able to figure out the word. Over the time I observed the class, I found there was an increase in the number of words the students were able to recall. Mr. Shelby constantly reviewed words studied and this seemed to help in their recall.

There was evidence during the period of observation that the students were increasing their vocabulary with words they were studying. They were able to provide more definitions of words that Mr. Shelby asked for and they were familiar with the word roots they had studied. Mr. Shelby stated he saw evidence in the students' work that they were using the vocabulary they were studying. He did not explain if this was in their written or oral language. All four informants felt they used the word root studies to recognize new words in their reading and they felt their understanding of where words came from would help them later on in their studies.

When I talked to my key informants about their word studies, they felt this was a useful activity.

Travis: I really enjoyed the etymology and word roots. That really fills me up with a lot of information and I could use it when I grow up. I think Mr. Shelby thinks word study is the most important activity.

Travis also said he used this when reading, to help him recognize new words.

Curtis: I don't use words in everyday conversations but when you're reading books most writers use major words. I understand most of it, like a mortician. I go ya?

Roxanne: I use word study skills when I'm reading to help me understand new words.

ETYMOLOGY SUMMARY

The memory work and etymology activities were examples of the type of activities Mr. Shelby believed would increase the students background knowledge and help them with future learning. They demonstrate how the students were given information and expected to store it for later use. They show the style of teaching Mr. Shelby used and demonstrate how teacher directed these activities were.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The children displayed their background knowledge through the dialogue that took place in the classroom and through the assigned learning activities they completed for Mr. Shelby. This display of background knowledge revealed that the children drew from three areas of experience when making connections with the assigned learning activities. They drew from their personal hands-on experience with a topic where they had actually physically taken part in this type of experience. An example of this was their writing about their bullying experiences. A second area they drew background knowledge from was vicarious experiences. They had not had the actual personal experience with the topic but they had read about, heard about, or viewed something that had provided them with the background knowledge about the topic. An example of how children used vicarious background knowledge could be seen in the activity of designing board games. The students had to demonstrate the knowledge they had gained through reading the assigned novels. From talking to the students about their games it was revealed that many had personal experience playing board games and had taken elements from those games and incorporated them into their own novel-based board games. Discussions with the students about where they got their ideas from to complete the various learning tasks, it was also revealed that they were greatly influenced by television shows and movies. Many of their ideas for writing assignments came from movies or television shows they had seen. Some students discussed books they had read that they took ideas from as well as comics such as X Factor, which were popular, particularly with the boys.

A third area of experience that students drew from was what I have termed instructional background knowledge. These experiences were directly related to some classroom instruction being given. The students either identified these instructions as being something Mr. Shelby or another teacher had taught them, or I had observed the instruction being given by Mr. Shelby. An example of this type of knowledge being displayed took place during the etymology lessons where students were asked for definitions of words they had previously been taught.

Those students who seemed to have a broad knowledge base of experiences and were able to access it were able to complete the assigned learning tasks with greater success. Students who appeared not to have the experience or perhaps were not making the necessary connections between the learning activities and their prior knowledge, appeared to experience the greatest frustration and were least successful completing the assigned learning tasks.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

This chapter provides a brief overview of the study, a discussion of the major findings and implications of those findings. Suggestions related to further study and teaching are also made.

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study was to investigate how children make connections between their background knowledge and the learning activities they carry out in their language arts program. In order to accomplish this, the researcher spent fifteen weeks observing the language arts lessons of a grade six classroom. Several types of data were collected; extensive field notes were kept, class lessons were tape recorded, the teacher, selected students, as well as four informants were interviewed and tape recorded, a dialogue journal was kept with the teacher and samples of students' work were collected. Analysis of data followed Spradley's (1980) Developmental Research Sequence in order to find themes and patterns within the data.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The review of the literature revealed that much of the research that has been done on background knowledge has been conducted in laboratory settings focusing on the processes involved in the use of background knowledge. Very little research has been conducted in the context of the classroom. In recognition of the gap that existed in the research it was the intent of the study to explore how children were displaying their use of background knowledge in the classroom setting. Based on the review of the literature on prior knowledge and schema theory the initial research questions were as follows.

1) In what ways do children display their use of prior knowledge during the comprehension process?

2) What types of activities and or teaching strategies facilitate the children's use of background knowledge in making sense of a particular learning experience?

Upon entering the research setting and discovering the rich environment of the classroom it became evident that the effects of the classroom setting had greater implications for the study than had been anticipated. The research questions were too focused and not suited to the social situation of the classroom. Initial analysis of the data indicated there were many more factors involved than those addressed by the research questions. The questions were therefore changed to address the factors involved in prior knowledge use in a classroom setting.

The general question that formed the conceptual framework for the study was:

In what ways do children use background knowledge in their display of literacy?

Since much of the children's use of background knowledge was covert and not displayed in a manner that could be observed, the following questions specifically addressed the observed use of background knowledge in the classroom.

1) In what ways do children display their use of background knowledge while engaging in language arts activities?

2) In what ways does the classroom context affect the students' display of background knowledge?

CONCLUSIONS AS RELATED TO THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Research Question 1

1) In what ways do children display their use of background knowledge while engaging in language arts activities?

In looking at the ways in which these children displayed their use of background knowledge it was necessary to look at the type of activity, the students' perception of the task, the expectations of the teacher, and the mediation provided by the teacher. These four factors were interrelated. How the students displayed their background knowledge or made connections between it and the learning tasks was directly related to these four factors.

1) The children displayed their use of background knowledge through the discussions we had about their comprehension of the novels they were reading and the responses they gave in class to the questions assigned about the novels.

2) It was evident from observing the children's responses in class, through discussions with the informants and by reading the children's responses to the assigned questions that the reading level of the first two assigned novels was above the reading ability of most of the students. They struggled with the text and their answers to the questions revealed that they had difficulty relating what they were reading to their own personal experiences.

Rosenblatt (1978) refers to the active involvement of the reader as being a "transactional" relationship between the reader and the text. The text activates certain elements from the reader's past experience so that connections are made between the reader's past experience and the text. The students in this classroom found the assigned novels difficult to read, and as a result the transaction between the text and the reader's past experience, in most cases, did not take place.

3) The students showed that they were able to increase their background knowledge of fantasy literature by being exposed to the assigned novels. They could see similar themes and character development in the three novels. By the time they had completed reading the third novel The Neverending Story, they had become familiar with the format of the novels and the instructional format used by Mr. Shelby in the classroom. In building their background knowledge through the instruction they received for the three novels the students were able use this knowledge to see connections between the novels.

4) The students had difficulty making connections between their background knowledge and the learning task when the task appeared to demand personal experience that was inappropriate for their age.

In some cases the language and syntax of the text was too difficult for them to understand, so that even if they possessed background experiences related to the text, comprehension was blocked by the struggle the students had with the text itself. In other cases students had not experienced fantasy literature so that even if they could understand the text they lacked experience with the structure of this genre of literature. Even those students who appeared to understand the novel and seemed to have a depth and breadth of personal experiences to draw from could not reflect on the book in the manner Mr. Shelby expected. I suggest that the students lacked the life experiences necessary to make the type of reflection demanded by the task. Reflecting on certain quotations was beyond the students' personal experiences at this age. They were able to read (i.e. decode) the text but did not have the personal experiences necessary to be able to evaluate what they had read and to reflect maturely on the quote in the way Mr. Shelby expected.

Devine (1986) states that often the syntactic form in which content is coded is sometimes beyond students' competence. Studies by Hunt (cited in Devine, 1986) have also demonstrated that a relationship exists between maturity and ability to process certain syntactic conditions. Students may know the grammatical arrangements of words in sentences but they "grow into" the ability to understand sentences with many clauses. However, children may be able to read aloud syntactical forms in which content is encoded beyond their competence (Huggins and Adams, cited in Devine, 1986). Although the students may have been able to read the text and possibly understand some of it, they could not fully comprehend the author's intended message.

5) The writing activities provided the students with the best

opportunities to draw from their background knowledge. The students usually did not have difficulty with the writing tasks. Although their writing was usually teacher directed, they could make the connections between their personal stock of knowledge and the learning tasks because they were in control of accessing their prior knowledge with the topic. When the students had difficulty with a writing task it was usually because they lacked the background knowledge to write about the topic. Occasionally they related the topic to their own background knowledge, but it was not what was expected by Mr. Shelby in order to successfully complete the task. In other words, Mr. Shelby's expectations were sometimes not understood by the students. However, the writing activities were generally most revealing in showing how the students were making connections between their background knowledge and the learning tasks. They also revealed the discrepancies which occured when Mr. Shelby did not make his expectations clear to the students.

6) Through discussions about their writing it was revealed that the students drew from various types of personal experiences for their ideas for their writing. Television and movies provided many ideas as well as books they had read, games they had played and songs they had heard. There also was evidence that they were using information learned from instruction in the classroom setting.

7) The board games the students designed displayed the connections they were making between the learning task and the prior knowledge they had about challenge types of games. The students explained how they got their ideas from video and computer games they played as well as from other role-playing and traditional board games. Those students who had the background knowledge of playing challenge types of games achieved

greater success with their board game design than those who had limited or no experience with challenge games.

Research Question 2

2) In what way does the classroom context affect the students' display of background knowledge?

There was evidence that the classroom context affected how the students displayed their background knowledge in several different ways. 1) The teacher's role was extremely important and dictated how the children used their background knowledge in connection with the learning tasks. This was mainly due to the particular style of teaching Mr. Shelby used. He was very structured in his approach and directed the learning activities by choosing the topics and dictating the format the activities were to have. The students' responses to the tasks were limited by the choice of activity and the expectations that were dictated for the task. The teacher-directed activities limited the amount of responsibility the students could take for their own learning. They did not have many opportunities to apply what knowledge they brought to the tasks without being constrained by Mr. Shelby's expectations or frame of reference. Barnes (1976) suggests that when students have to operate within this question-answer method of teaching, the students' capacity for taking a responsible part in learning is devalued in the students' eyes as well as in the teacher's. Implicitly, it also devalues both the knowledge the students have and their capacity to use language to apply this knowledge to a new task. In this class the learning took place within Mr. Shelby's dictated framework and I did not observe much creative meaningful learning taking place outside of the dictated framework or expectations he gave for the learning tasks.

2) The classroom atmosphere was conducive to learning because the teacher and students had an excellent rapport. Mr. Shelby worked very hard to motivate the students and maintain an atmosphere in the classroom that supported the students' endeavours and provided a pleasant work environment. He was concerned about the students' self concepts and work habits that would help make them successful lifelong learners. His personal commitment and enthusiasm for teaching was an important factor in the study. Although the students experienced difficulty with some of the learning tasks they persevered and worked with the materials and activities because Mr. Shelby made it an enjoyable thing to do. He chose quality literature to study and was aware of the types of activities the students enjoyed and were involved in outside the classroom. As a result his choice of activities was generally of interest for the students. This was particularly evident with the rap poems and challenge games. He was enthusiastic about learning and wanted to instill this enthusiasm in his students.

3) What greatly influenced the degree of success experienced by the students was the extent of mediation provided by Mr. Shelby. According to Vygotsky (1978) and Bruner (1978) what children can do with help from others is more indicative of their mental development than what they can do alone. Most of the work that was completed for Mr. Shelby was done without interaction among the students themselves or even between Mr. Shelby and the individual student. He provided directions

but did not model what completed assignments should be like in order to meet his expectations. As Langer & Applebee (1986) have stated, in order to provide "scaffolding" between what was expected and the learning tasks themselves the students needed to receive help with the elements of the tasks that were beyond their range of competence. They also needed encouragement to complete the elements which were within their range of competence. It is the mediation that enables students to either use the background knowledge they have or build background knowledge to be successful at completing the assigned learning tasks. Many learning opportunities in this classroom were missed because Mr. Shelby did not assess the student's background knowledge before assigning the task, and as a result did not provide assistance to those students who needed it, in order for them to be able to complete the tasks to meet his expectations.

Research by R. C. Anderson (1985), Devine (1986) and Farr and Rosen (1974) emphasizes that intervention to build students' background knowledge before attempting the learning task is extremely valuable in helping to make connections between what the students know and the task itself. Intervention before a task is assigned and the provision of mediation for those who require assistance, can eliminate many problems the students might experience due to lack of background knowledge or unclear teacher expectations.

The board game activity illustrated how the students experienced frustration when many of them lacked the prior knowledge to be able to design the game to meet Mr. Shelby's expectations for the assigned task. The mediation or teaching which would allow students to use their understanding of board games, and modify and adjust this schema to be compatible with Mr. Shelby's, was missing. Without instruction or sharing of ideas with the other students, the students had to rely on their individual stock of knowledge of the topic, which may have been limited.

Mr. Shelby assumed the students had the background knowledge necessary to complete the task, when in fact this knowledge was lacking for many of the students. Also without having the opportunity to share and discuss their ideas with classmates they could not gain from the experiences of others. As Vygotsky (1981) suggests, the interaction with others and assistance received is what enables students to reach the potential of their abilities. The students in this classroom were being judged on products that may not have reflected their abilities. Had they received the necessary assistance the final products may have been a better indication of the knowledge the students had of the novel.

When the students came to design a second board game they were much more confident and eager to have the freedom to be creative with their games because they had the necessary prior experience to be successful with this task. They had acquired this knowledge from their first experience and from seeing and playing the other students' games. Thus they were able to relate this second board game experience to what they already knew.

4) An important insight gained from the study was that individual conferencing with the students was the most revealing and direct way to learn how the students were making connections between what they knew and how they were applying this knowledge to the learning tasks. Conferencing with the students and discussing their work provided insights on how to provide assistance that would build background

knowledge or help them make connections between what they knew and what was demanded by the learning activity.

5) The students were given very few opportunities to conference or share ideas amongst themselves or with the teacher outside of the structured instructional situation. As a result they did not get opportunities to gain from each others experiences. The students worked in isolation and as a result those students with more background knowledge of the topics achieved greater success with the learning task. Those students who lacked background knowledge or who were unable to access what they had, did not have opportunities to gain from other student's experiences.

6) The teacher-centered or directed activities appeared to limit the children's ability to make connections between their background knowledge and the learning tasks. There seemed to be a greater concern with interpreting the teacher's expectations and less creative, meaningful learning taking place that demonstrated a use of background knowledge in relation to the learning task. The students were not really learning in the sense that they were not relating the activities to what they already knew. Neither were they extending this acquired knowledge through a discovery or guided process. Instead the students had to try to meet Mr. Shelby's expectations of how to carry out the assigned activities.

IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING

The results of this study have several implications for teaching methods which will enhance childrens' literacy development. It also facilitates a greater understanding of childrens' literacy development and how children use their background knowledge, in that process.

For language arts programmes to be more effective in meeting the students' needs in terms of meaningful learning activities, they must take into account what experience or background knowledge students are bringing to the task. Reading materials must be at the appropriate reading ability of the students and the students must be able to make connections between what they know and what they are trying to understand.

The quality and quantity of the students' prior knowledge greatly affects their ability to interpret and comprehend what they are reading. The students in this study experienced difficulty with the selected novels because, in most cases, they lacked experience with the literature or could not interpret what they were reading in order to make the necessary connection between their prior knowledge and the text.

Many of the students experienced difficulty with the language of *The Black Cauldron* and *Taran Wanderer* and this prevented them from gaining meaning from the text. As readers they could not become actively involved with the story. Being unable to understand the text they could not relate it to their own experiences. In many cases there was little or no transaction taking place between the reader and the text (Rosenblatt 1978). Those students who brought a developed background of experience that could be related to the text were able to comprehend the first two novels fairly well and appeared to gain greater meaning from what they were reading.

The teacher plays an important role in bridging the gap between what is known by the students and what they are expected to learn. Teachers need to access the students' background knowledge before assigning learning tasks, so that mediation can be provided for those students who may not have the necessary background knowledge to be able to complete the task successfully. Problems arose in this class because the teacher's expectations and the student's perceptions of these expectations were not the same. It cannot be assumed that students understand what is expected in an assignment if explicit instructions or modelling of the task is not presented. Teachers need to check with the students to ensure they have the same understanding of the requirements of a task.

Students in this study were not encouraged to discuss and share ideas about the learning tasks assigned except when the discussion was led by Mr. Shelby. As the interaction was limited, both among the students themselves and between Mr. Shelby and the students, the use of language as a means of gaining meaning was limited.

Mediation was limited to the provision of information. The children's understanding was not assessed to determine the mediation necessary to enable the child to be successful with the learning task. The students were evaluated on performance achieved without assistance. Had assistance been provided their performance would have been more indicative of what they were truly capable of doing given the background experience they brought to the task. This was true of the writing as well as the reading assignments. The evaluation of writing assignments appeared to be based mostly on the students ability with the mechanics of writing yet the students did not receive instruction on the conventions of writing. As a result improvements were often not made to the conventions which were causing difficulty.

Hanson, Pearson (1983) and Au (1979) suggest that students of lower ability need specific instruction on how to use background knowledge before they read the text. The students in this classroom who were assessed as being of lower ability did seem to need much more instruction than they were receiving. Greater success could have been achieved through the provision of instruction to prepare the students for the tasks. The more able students appeared to be making satisfactory progress but the weaker students appeared to be experiencing a great deal of difficulty with the learning tasks.

Mr. Shelby's teaching appeared to be strongly influenced by a concern for the children's future needs in learning. He did not seem to focus on the children's developmental needs and as a result did not take into account the students' individual differences when teaching. This may be why the necessary mediation was not provided for the ongoing learning tasks. This particular style of teaching might be more suitable for students in the higher grades whose focus is more on future learning goals. Mr. Shelby was concerned about his students and about developing work habits and a joy of learning that would help them become lifelong learners. However, perhaps a stronger focus on the individual needs of the students may have reduced the struggles that many of the weaker students encountered with the reading materials and learning tasks he selected.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

As indicated in the review of the literature there has been little research conducted in classroom settings or in other uncontrolled environments. Educators must rely on research conducted in controlled laboratory environments. The conclusions of this study indicate that there are many questions still needing answers. It is impossible to observe how comprehension takes place in the mind of the student but we can gain insights about literacy development through discussion and observation in the classroom environment.

The researcher suggests that investigation in the following areas related to this study would help form a more comprehensive understanding of how children learn or relate the new to the already known.

1. The learning activities in this language arts program were primarily teacher directed. Significant gains were made by the students in developing and extending their background knowledge in the areas of instruction that were given. It would be important to discover if there would be even greater gains if activities were altered to allow them to become student centered activities.

2. The role of the teacher proved to be very significant for this study. The importance of the teacher's role to date has not been the focus of research on childrens' literacy development. An investigation of the role of the teacher in the literacy development might reveal how students' literacy development is influenced by teaching styles, expectations and methods of instruction used.

3. The interraction between the teacher and students and the students with each other appeared to influence the students' learning in this study. How this interraction influences the students' perception of learning tasks is an area that needs investigation in the

classroom situation.

4. The students who lacked background knowledge, or appeared not to have a broad selection of life experiences to draw from, did not achieve the same success as those students who seemed to have a greater range of experiences. How to increase the background knowledge of these students who have limited experience to draw from is an area of research that needs to be explored.

FINAL REFLECTIONS

In using a qualitative approach to gain a better understanding of how the children were making connections between their background knowledge and the learning activities, I was able to listen and discuss one-on-one with several of the students. This allowed me to gain an understanding of what each of them was bringing to the learning activities in terms of experience. It was interesting to study how the students were making connections between their background knowledge and the assigned learning activities. It emphasized how important it is to listen and observe the students as individuals, separate from the class as a whole. The interviews with the students, particularly with regard to the writing activities, revealed the areas in which students needed instruction to increase their understanding or improve on a particular skill. This one-on-one time emphasized the importance of the role of the teacher in providing instruction that meets the individual needs of the students. Too often as teachers perhaps our intentions are honourable in choosing the particular materials and activities we present to the students but we do not make the learning meaningful for the children. Hence the children are not truly learning. The importance of knowing what the students bring to the learning activities cannot be emphasized enough if we are to provide the assistance that will ensure that meaningful learning has taken place.

> If you can both listen to children and accept their answers not as things to just be judged right or wrong but as pieces of information which may reveal what the child is thinking you will have taken a giant step toward becoming a master teacher rather than merely a disseminator of information (Easley and Zwoyer 1975, p. 25).

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APPENDIX A

EXAMPLES OF DESCRIPTIVE HORROR WRITING AND STUDENTS' INTERVIEWS ABOUT THEIR WRITING

Chapto 1

The forest darkside

The moon had almost a undevil [illegible] of bloodshed around the clouds. Joan was wieghting for her newlywed Alan at there cabin. Her cabin was located down south by the Canadian Rockeys. As Joan waited for her husband impatiently she felt a cold breeze of fear run through her. She heard a rustle in the bushes she turned around slowly her face as pale as the moon. She felt like an icicle about to melt into a puddle of blood. "Alan is that you" her voice drifted off into the silence of the night. She could hear Loons by the water front chanting frantically almost urging her to run. Without thinking she began to sprint. As she ran through the damp and misty forist. The forest towering trees and sharp thorn bushes seemed like they were trying to grab her. Then she saw the dark log cabin. She ran in and closed the door. She blocked the door with a old beat up couch. As she kept crouched on the cabin floor she felt her heart explode with fear. Then she [illegible] she wondered why she was so scared. Her thought were interupted by a howl from a wolf. The sound was at first loud then drifting off in the moon light. what every it was .. its .. safe now.... She heard a snarl outside the cabin. Then a hand or animals claw busted through the door. Then the door was thrown open with such impact that the china doll fell off the counter and smashed into a million pieces. In the door way stood the werewolf. The monster had a baby fawn in his hands which he had ripped out his heart and testicles. The werewolf eyes were bloodred with a yellow pupil. He had black fur and he was covered in blood. His hands were huge with sharp claws that ripped out the fawns heart. He had on remains of a bisness suit. His teeth were razer sharp with blood leaking like river ove flowing..

By Curtis

APPENDIX A

NOVEMBER 1

Interview with Curtis

Int: I want to talk about the story that you did. The horror story. Where did you get your idea from to write this?

Curtis: I kind of like suspense so I got my idea actually when Mr. Shelby read this book to us. The guy named Corey went out of control. When he was doing his voice, explaining it and it seemed so...He raised his face. It was so gory. It blew up; The guy...and it was gross. So I was thinking of doing that but not making it so gory, and make it gory in some parts and describe it and talk about it.

Int: When did you get the idea though of this man and his wife in their cabin, and there being a werewolf as the main character? Where did you get that idea from? Did that just come out of your head, or had you seen some movies or read a book or something that gave you that idea?

Curtis: I heard this ghost story about this guy and his girl in a car and the guy went to get some gas and the girl was inside the car and the werewolf got him.______________.

Int: Now that's where you got the idea. Now what were some other interesting parts?. Maybe you can explain it to me. She ran out of the cabin to another cabin. Is that how that happened?

Curtis: She went out of the cabin.

Int: Then she ran, she went through the forest. She ended up at someplace else. Then she saw a dark cabin then she was looking for her husband. Then she went to another cabin is that it? Okay, now what does this guy look like. I don't know if you described him, did you?

Curtis: Ya, here.

Int: Okay, a baby

Curtis: That's the gross part.

Int: Oh ya, why did you put that in. Baby face in his land?

Curtis: Fawn.

Int: Fawn oh ya, what made you think of putting that in? What was your idea behind that?

Curtis: Well my idea behind that is in the beginning of the story in the back. In the back you can hear noises I was thinking there had to be a reason for that maybe a fawn or maybe the werewolf.

Int: And did you put that in because it's kind of gross? Like it would be upsetting to your reader. Are you thinking about your reader? I'm trying to dig into your head. You're the author of the story so why would you pick that particular detail?

Curtis: No its not exactly, because I want them to know the werewolf is not merciful.

Int: Okay, good, that's what I was thinking. Why would you pick that. We usually put things in our stories because we have a reason? He had bloody eyes and yellow pupils. Now have you ever seen a werewolf like this before. Where did you get that description from?

Curtis: Oh, "Thriller" in the beginning this boy and this girl are watching a movie. Well in the movie well Michael Jackson is in the movie and he starts, turning into the werewolf and he looks really scary. This black hair, it was really scary. These yellow pupils.

Int: Okay, ah, now, how would you end this. How would you end the story here.

Curtis: I would be planning to be like suspense and there would be suspense. That would be in chapter one. In chapter two it would say now what was his name? Ya Allen. Allen comes back and there are he can't find his wife. And he sees the foottracks to the cabin and he goes in the cabin but the door has been broken and the windows have been smashed so he was going back, and there were all these birds. Like I was thinking of this in the next chapter. All these birds are on the corpse and he thought it was a deer corpse but he looks, and it was his girlfriend.

Int: That' scary

Curtis: Ya.

Int: So your talking about chapters and stuff. What do you, how do you know what would go into a first chapter and what would go into a second chapter? How do you know how to organize your story? Where do you get those ideas from?

Curtis: Ideas? I look at people and how they write and how they're writing. I know certain types of writing and my favorite is just starting off. I don't like the 'Once upon a time.' I like it just to start.

Int: Jump right into the story?

Curtis: Ya, then

Int: What have you read like that?

Curtis: Um, Oh ya, this wasn't really a scary book. In one of the books by C.S. Lewis, The Wizard's Nephew, Um It begins like they start talking about, they start talking about it, and they jump into the story. They just jump into it. Its says um she starts here and she goes over here.

Int: How are you doing with The Black Cauldron.

Curtis: I got that from The Black Cauldron too. It just jumps. It starts with Taran he's, um in a pigpen and it just jumps in there too.

Int: Your using just your experience your own experiences with reading. That's what you model your stories on. What's happening with your board game. Do you feel comfortable, with it.

Curtis: Like I have these neat things. There are these they are like chance cards. You have to turn the things and kill the huntsmen. If you kill three this guy ______________ . The huntsmen is really powerful. You can beat him, you can loose your turn, escape, or get caught in a trap and lose 3 turns or your almost finished.

Int: The other thing I looked at was your rap poem. Where did you get your idea for that? Where did you pick that you wanted to be a cop?

Curtis: Well you see I watch WAC wrestling and there's this guy called Big Boss and I was kind of thinking of him and a thing called Copper Crazy. Its California crazy.

Int: He's a wrestler.

Curtis: No in one of their songs they are having a party and they say come to California Crazy.

Int: Who has this song?

Curtis: R.T.M.C.? (name of a group).

Int: Did you listen to songs before you did this with Mr. Shelby? Like how did he get you to think about what you had to do with this rap because I wasn't around?

Curtis: He knows we all listen to rap, so.

Int: You already knew what a rap was? You didn't find it hard to do?

Curtis: No.

Int: I think they are great. I wondered where that came from. So you are just trying to be a mean character. A mean cop. Okay next day what I am going to do with you. I want to look at your Black Cauldron questions and I'd like to talk to you about your board game if it is done. I won't be here tomorrow. It might be early next week before I got back to you. Would you ask Jeannette to come in tell her I'm in Mr. Burghart's room. She'll know where that is.

Creep Night I

It all started when, I went over to my friends house for a slumber party. Everything was fine until... the sun began to sink fast, fast, and a little too fast. Them all the noises began to come out. All us girls were downstairs watching the movies we rented. Just as, "Phyco" was going to kill the girl— "Uum nnnnnnnn" buzzed the furnace. we all screamed, loud enough to wake up the neighbors... Luckily, we didn't.

We decided to go to sleep but just as we did the sink faucet up stairs was making an irritating noise, so my friend and I left the other girls and went to shut off the faucet. Another correction. All us girls went to shut it off because none of them wanted to stay downstairs. We shut off the faucet and heard noises coming from the backyard. We thought it was a bunch of ugly grasshoppers so we ignored the noise as we got something to eat. As we all bit into our biscuits we heard howling getting louder, and louder, and louder! We decided to investigate... there was nothing outside. but now the noise came from inside the house. We just stood there until the backdoor slammed shut! We all looked up and saw a room upstairs with the light on... We quickly got on top of a boat which had been just used by someone, but, who?

We all got up but noone was there! For the rest of the night we waited for my friends parents to come. Of course, her parents came and we went in.

From that day on we wondered what it was. It could of been our imagination but it also could be something I couldnt explain.

By Jeannette

NOVEMBER 1

Interview with Jeannette about story

Int: Hi, Jeannette, I want to talk to you about your story that you did for Mr. Shelby. The Creepy Night. What gave you the idea for the story? Where did you get the idea for the story?

Jeannette: Someone telling a story - at a sleep over.

Int: Why did you choose being at a friends house at a slumber party? Why did you choose that? Instead of a monster one?

Jeannette: I don't like those kinds of stories.

Int: What did you think about the part of the story that Mr. Shelby read to you? The Stephen King?

Jeannette: Pretty gross.

Int: It was pretty gross was it. Pretty descriptive.

Jeannette: Bloody and gory.

Int: No I was wondering that because you didn't get into that. Where some of the other stories, they liked all that blood and gore. So you had a bunch of girls just having a sleep over. What made you decide about that noise? Where did that come from?
(Tape not clear paraphrasing from notes).

Jeannette: talked about being alone a lot because parents work and sometimes imagines she hears noises.

Int: Okay, I do that too you hear all kinds of sounds that you wouldn't normally hear. Why did you choose a bunch of grasshoppers? Where did that come from? (Tape not clear).

Jeannette: talked about once being at a sleep over where they couldn't sleep because grasshoppers made too much noise.

Int: Oh so they make a lot of noise like chirping sound? I'm curious I want to know where you get all these ideas. Okay you decided to investigate. Now you have somebody, was in the house but he disappeared. Was that your idea?

Jeannette: talks about having an imaginary character she thinks is in her house when she is alone. He comes out of the basement and goes upstairs.

Int: Sort of a ghost type of character. If you were to describe him what do you think he would look like?

Jeannette: Part white and part black.

Int: Like a mime type of character? Would he be somebody that would be evil or bad?

Jeannette: In between.

Int: In between you wouldn't want to think he's too evil because you wouldn't want to stay home alone. So he'd be someone sort of ghost like. Quiet, wandering around. Have you ever seen a character like in something your seen or something you've read?

Jeannette: No (buzzing on tape) talks about character from book.

Int: Does he look like that? Does that character look like that person in the book?

Jeannette: They describe him.

Int: Okay so that's where you got the picture in your head. Another thing you did for Mr. Shelby was this rap poem. We sort of talked a little bit about it the last time and you said you had a hard time writing because you don't listen to rap very much.

Jeannette: My sister does.

Int: So you would have a hard time just putting it together. So you decided to do it about yourself.

Jeannette: Well my sister she does rap. ... (talks about how she copied her.

Int: So you just sort of copied what she did and got your ideas from her. How are you doing with *The Black Cauldron*. Are you finished?

Jeannette: Just about.

Int: Did you enjoy it after it was all done?

Jeannette: Well at the beginning it was dull and I didn't understand it but I went on. I just couldn't stop reading it.

Int: Oh, good that tells me you must have enjoyed it. Have you got your board game laid out?

Jeannette: (Talks about how had game done but wants to do it over to add more things).

Int: Why because you know more about the story now?

Jeannette: Yes.

Int: Is your game going to be a board game where you roll dice and land on places is that the way yours is?

Jeannette: I have these two cards and (...tells about how cards will work).

Int: Do you have a game like that that you got that idea from? Or do you have any games like that?

Jeannette: I remember I got a game sort of like that. (Describes that game. Where one things leads to the next).

Int: Sort of one thing moves to the next. I'm going to look at your Black Cauldron questions you have answered and talk about them. I'll have to photocopy those first. So I can take them and I'd also like to talk about your board game. Could you ask Travis?. Great. Thanks Jeannette.

The Return of Michael

Oct. 14th/88

As he falls his flesh dries to dust and blows away! Hi there fellow students, teachers and friends. My name is Ephraim Quakadam (The first world wonder). I am the author of this boring story entitled. This story is about a vampire who returns to... well I shouldn't spoil the boringness. You guys can find out how boring it is for yourself. Now on with the boringness!... I mean story!

As our hero struggles among the the rats, a scream pierces the night. It sounds like Jamie, and it's coming from right outside the cellar. Anyone at the ? door is pushed by someone very strong, and the door flies open. They see Gail pointing her gun at two struggling figures: Jamie and a pajama-clad man. It is Michael Bell et, returned from the dead as a vampire. Gail opens fire on Michael as he shoves Jamie to the ground. Bullets can't harm a vampire. Gail steps in with her wooden stick. Michael shouldn't last long at all. As he falls, his flesh dries to dust and blows away. Gail sob ~~hysterically~~ once the fight is over. "I never had to kill anyone before!" Gail's not upset. Any one who searches finds flattened bullets within Michael's empty pajamas. Jamie is unharmed but trembling. She explains that she left the cellar after light went out, to check the circuit breakers, and was attacked by surprise.

By Travis

NOVEMBER 1

Interview with Travis

Int: Alright, have a seat I'd like to talk to you about your story. Where did you get your ideas from?

Travis: This story.

Int: Ah, your scary story, descriptive paragraph.

Travis: Well I have this board game and I took some ideas from this. Some of us have played this. (Talks about how you can take on roles in the game).

Int: Can you read it to me in case I've missed. I think I've missed some things. How about you just read it to me.

Travis: As he fell his flesh turned to dust (reads whole story).

Int: Okay why did you choose these words about the flesh drying up.

Travis: Because I thought it was scary.

Int: Where did you get that. Did that come from another story you have read or did you see something on T.V.?

Travis: Well something like this.

Int: Well the reason I ask is because some other students have that in their stories. I wondered if this was maybe a movie that some of you have been watching?

Travis: You see I have this role playing game and I've played it with some students like Richard.

(Tape not clear, paraphrasing from notes).

Explains that he is trying to get the reader to be the character. Uses someone with pyjamas because it comes from a story from a comic, Gerps story. He enjoys mysteries. He talks about having trouble with his handwriting. He picked the vampire character because of Stephen King's novel. The stick does double harm. That's why the bullets are flattened. He uses the nightstick because it harms a vampire. It does double damage. He uses information on 'Jack the Ripper' and Vampires from encyclopedia he has of facts on the subjects.

The Murder In Sara's attic

Sara was sleeping soundless, all alone on
this cold wintery ningnt. She had just had,
a nightmare and woke up screaming "Ahhhh!"
Then she realized she was all ~~as~~ alone,
"Oh, fwewf!" "Im just in my own house!"
Then she heard a bang coming from
the attic.
Then just to be safe she decided to go
up the stairs of the attic and wanted to
check it out. She was quite scared. Finally she
reached the top of the attic. She slowly opened
the door. "Creeeeeeeeeeaaeeeeaack!" ~~went~~ the
door, and she walked in.
She was looking aroud the room when
suddenly the door closed, the lights went off, and
she heard some footsteps walking foward
to her on the creeking attic floor.
"Wh-wh-who's here, what do you want?"
she said as bravely as she could. Then she
felt a very shivery feeling on her spine. She
heard the footsteps coming closer and closer.
Oh no, she thought. She was so scared that
she couldn't say enything ~~[illegible]~~ enymore.
She couldn't even move, not one inch.
Then suddenly she felt a cold quirry feeling
arm wrap around her neck.
Sara thought to herself; no no no,
please, dont kill me.
Then she heard an ugly, scary, voice say
"Say your prayers girl, your a dead dog!"
She Then felt a cold knife stick through
her throught. "aaaaaaah!" She screamed.

~~Seen of Sara~~ The knife sliced across
the bone of her throught. The blood of
her throught was all over the floor now.
And that was the last ever seen of
Sara.

THE

By Roxanne

END

NOVEMBER 1

Interview with Roxanne

Int: Okay Roxanne, what I am going to be doing with you is just looking at your work you are doing and talking about some of the things you are doing. Maybe why you decided to write this way or whatever. I want to dig into your head just a little just to see what your background knowledge is. Okay, so what I'd like to do, what I did with the other three students when I taped them, is have them tell me a little about yourself, your family and that sort of thing. Could you do that?

Roxanne: Okay, um, my mom is getting married and I'm having a new Dad.

Int: Uh huh.

Roxanne: My mom is pregnant. I'm going to have a new sister or brother and I'm the only child right now.

Int: You'll be a really big sister won't you because there is a big age difference isn't there? Do you do a little or a lot of reading? Do you read a lot.

Roxanne: Ya.

Int: What kinds of things do you read?

Roxanne: I read adventure books and uh...

Int: Do you read any of the high school type of books that you can get from the library? Teenagers and their problems and that kind of thing?.

Roxanne: Well a couple.

Int: Ya. What did you think of The Black Cauldron? Did you enjoy it or did you find it too hard to read?

Roxanne: Well I didn't really understand it very good.

Int: You didn't? Why do you think that was?

Roxanne: Well like the way they talked. They talked like its hard to understand sometimes what they talked about.

Int: The language?

Roxanne: Sometimes I read it and I don't understand what's going on.

Int: That's frustrating. That's kind of boring if your don't get into the book. You didn't really find that you got into the book like Mr. Shelby is talking about.

Roxanne: Ya.

Int: That's too bad. Maybe that's because it's science fiction. Some people just don't like that sort of stuff. Sometimes you do. It could be just the language. Do you go to movies a lot?

Roxanne: Well, I like movies a lot but like we don't have a VCR but we rent a VCR sometimes.

Int: It's pretty expensive isn't it? I have a copy of your story and I did that for each of the four students I'm working with. Yours was really neat I really liked it. I was really scared. It kept me reading all the way to the end of it. What gave you the idea?. How did you get the idea for your story?.

Roxanne: Well I guess it was from T.V.

Int: Was there any one movie that you saw about a girl going to an attic or anything or a lot of them?

Roxanne: Well ya there was this one movie I saw. I can't remember what it was called.

Int: I was amazed that she went upstairs. If I was that girl I wouldn't. If you were that girl would you go upstairs? No. You just did it for Mr. Shelby, the story that's what I was thinking. I wouldn't go upstairs at all. You said there was an ugly and scary voice. Now you didn't describe this character. What kind of character was it? What did you have in your mind about what that character looked like?

Roxanne: A person, just a person.

Int: Did he have ghost like qualities was he invisible?

Roxanne: He was a person.

Int: Could you tell me a little bit about what he looks like in your mind?

Roxanne: Well he's tall and is wearing a black leather jacket.

Int: Why would you think of a character like that? Did you think he was a scary kind of character?

Roxanne: Well ya, black is sort of evil.

Int: It's an evil colour isn't it. It's a colour we think of when we think of things like that and black we see in movies. Scary characters wear black. And what else were you going to do with this story? I know Mr. Shelby said just to write a small part. Would you have something else happen to her?

Roxanne: Well I would go...

Int: Why did you chose to have her throat slit? Why didn't you have her strangled or something? What made you chose that?

Roxanne: Well because it's more gross like and I wanted to do it like in the movie. In the movie she had her hands cut off

Int: Now Mr. Shelby read something from Stephen King's book. He read a paragraph before you wrote your stories to get you thinking about what a descriptive paragraph was.

Roxanne: Oh, ya.

Int: Did that influence you at all? Did you think about it when you were writing the story?

Roxanne: Ya.

Int: So you probably took it from that. Now Roxanne I don't have your rap poem, did you do a rap poem.?

Roxanne: Ya I did, it was in my language scribbler.

Int: Okay maybe you can give it to me after you go back to class and I'll get a copy of it. Are you enjoying being in Mr. Shelby's room?

Roxanne: Ya.

Int: What you do like about it?

Roxanne: Well most teachers just tell you to do things, It's fun being in Mr. Shelby's room.

Int: You like his sense of humour.

Roxanne: Ya.

Int: He puts a lot of stuff on the board. Do you read that stuff?

Roxanne: I used to, well sometimes.

Int: The other thing I would like is your questions. When do you have to have them finished for Mr. Shelby?

Roxanne: Thursday.

Int: Maybe I'll get those later. Because I'd like to go through those with you and talk about them and what about your board game, how are you coming with it?

Roxanne: Well, okay.

Int: Even though you didn't enjoy that novel that much? your not finding it to hard to do.

Roxanne: Sort of.

Int: Okay I think I'll leave it there, be sure to remind in case I forget and we can talk about that next time.

APPENDIX B

EXAMPLES OF STUDENTS' BULLY STORIES

The Neighborhood Bully

Jan 9 1989

By Jeannette

One day, I was at the park when I met Jean. We went down the slides and everything and then we just settled on the swings. Our friend Justin joined us then left off to some place. Jean and I started talking when suddenly, this big girl cut our conversation with the word, "Scram!" I really felt like dirt when Jean said, "No." I felt like even more dirt when she pushed me down to the ground. My heart pounded hard when two mean boys chased me around the park. I tripped over a stick pointing out of the sand-box and was hurt. The two boys tore my jacket and finally tore it

The fight had sort of ended with me and Jean dirty from head to toe. I had arrived home when my mom scolded me and took me back to the park. While I was in the car I felt sort of guilty, but sad. I didn't really want my mom to fight my battles. My mom scolded the girl and we went home. I felt that I should solve my own problems. But today, I am still not offered that option. Not to be mean, but Rita is sort of a bully.

The Return

1986

Encounters of the First Kind Part II
(Bully)

By Travis

I was walking down the hallway and all was quiet when all of the sudden ...'[]: -!-÷().?"";/<>. Hi there! fellow students teaches and friends my name is Jose Ephraim Arukadam, I am the author of this story. Tonight we will witness my first encounter with a bully! Now on with the bullying I mean story Heh! Heh!

It was the year 1986 September the 6th Friday (The 13th). Tonight was the night that my sister and I, had to register for my language classes. I dropped her off at her class and said, "Good-bye" (and I really meant it). After dropping my sister off at her classroom, I was praying, and in my prayers I was preparing to meet my doom! .... The classroom! Then it struck me, hard and fast! I forgot my pencil! I ran back as fast as I could go! Then it really struck me, harder and faster! I forgot my eraser! Dang! What would I do with out my eraser! I'll tell what I'd do! I'd make a ~~m~~ zillion mistakes! That's what I'd do! I continued to run, hoping I wouldn't be late for my classes. I had now reached my sister's classroom (finally) I asked for my sister Joyce. She didn't seem very happy when I asked for a pencil and an eraser, "But I don't have an eraser and I don't have another pencil", my sister said angrily. "Well then break your pencil in half and sharpen ~~some~~ the other end," I angrily replied. Unfortunately I had received the end without the eraser. Oh well I guess I have to stick with making a zillion mistakes. I ran, and I guess you could say I ran like a "clumsy ox", because out from behind the corner who do you expect Stephen (the one and only) "What the hay do ya think your doing you clumsy ox" "ya want to fight or something" Stephen said furiously. "Um no not really!", I said stuttering. "Well to bad", said Stephen smiling. Then he hit me...'[]:-!-÷().?"";/<>. I was out cold, sitting there like a sack of potatoes. I couldn't take any more of it. I went up to Stephen and gave him a piece of my mind.. '[]:-!-÷().?"";/<>, THE END.

Jan. 9 Me the Past Bully

I used to be a bully. You see I was in this gang. We beat up kids and got in loads of trouble. The reason I did this was because well... (It's kind of stupid.) It was fun! Well they [illegible] anyway. Besides I thought we were just fooling around. Finally, I thought to my self this was dumb and mean and plain stupid. I knew the kids wouldn't like me so I quit the gang. I really didn't consider that I was a bully but in the kids eyes I must of been. So I stopped. So here I am now. I have my own little gang. My gang sticks up for kids instead of being bullys. Well Shawns gang still running wild so I don't think involved with them again...... I hope???

APPENDIX C

EXAMPLES OF STUDENTS' NEVERENDING STORY ADVENTURES AND INTERVIEWS ABOUT THEIR WRITING

Atreyu

By Travis

It was late night when Atreyu had returned from his hunt and to his surprise all the villagers had just ... just disappeared. They were supposed to have set-up a graduation party to celebrate his hunt. "Hi there! Fellow students, teachers and friends. My name is Jose Ephraim [illegible]. I am the author of this Boring Story. This boring story is about a boy named Atreyu. Well, I better not spoil the fun I'll let you find out on your own. Now on with the borringness! I mean story! Heh! Heh!

It was late at night when Atreyu had returned from his hunt and to his surprise all the villagers had just ... disappeared. They were supposed to have set-up a graduation party to celebrate his hunt. He jumped on to his faithful horse Bob and galloped away towards the Elder's mansion. He jumped off his faithful horse Bob and knocked at the door. Atreyu waited patiently. There was no answer. Then he rang the door bell. Atreyu waited patiently. There was no answer. Then Crash! The alarm system had been set off by an intruder. Atreyu had just busted down the door. That's not right, Atreyu thought to himself. They're supposed to be a zillion guards dressed up in battle suits and a billion guard dogs at their side all chasing me at a million miles per hour. After aging one year Atreyu had now found the elder's room. Atreyu slowly turned the knob, expecting all the villagers to jump out and surprise him. Atreyu opened the door and slowly peeked in, but nothing happened. Atreyu saw the elder lying on his bed and gripping his stomach with immense pain and power. When the elder turned to see who was standing at the doorway. He stopped and shut his eyes. Atreyu turned around and looked at the far side of the room. All the villagers had been lying around a giant birthday cake that was already lit. They had seemed to be gripping their stomachs as well. There was only one hope for Atreyu, Yoyomel... the Yo-Yo. When Atreyu was only a little boy the villagers told him about Yoyomel. "You see according to the [illegible] legend Yoyomel was a giant yo-yo who said very wise things eg. "It's no use crying over spill milk", "Look before you leap" etc. So off Atreyu went riding on his faithful horse Bob in search of Yoyomel the Yo-Yo. Atreyu had been travelling up and down and side to side across the Silver mountains for three days and two nights. Finally Atreyu had found something that would look large enough for Yoyomel the Yo-Yo to live in. It was a cave, shaped in the shape of a Yo-Yo. Atreyu took one step in. Then the next. Unaware of what would happen to him. When Atreyu entered the cave he found himself surrounded by thousands and thousands of Yo-Yos. Hanging all over the place. No wonder Yoyomel was called the Yo-Yo. Something told Atreyu to keep on going and not turn back. Atreyu was now unsure of what he was going to do. Should he go forward or turn back. For the sake of the villagers he walked forward into total darkness. Atreyu saw something that made him want to fall down laughing. What the ancient [illegible] was right. Ygramul was a giant Yo-Yo. Atreyu could now tell that Ygramul the Yo-Yo was furious. Maybe it was because Ygramul the Yo-Yo had heard that Atreyu had learnt that Ygramul the Yo-Yo was a Yo-Yo or maybe it was because the large thing that Ygramul the Yo-Yo didn't seem to give up fighting. It looked like Ygramul's jumping up and down on the ... the thing for a long time because the rope Ygramul the Yo-Yo was hanging onto was just about to snap. Sure enough it did, but this wasn't the first time Ygramul the Yo-Yo's rope broke. There were hundreds and hundreds of broken string all bundled up in holes. Looks like Ygramul the Yo-Yo also noticed that Atreyu had been watching very closely because here he comes rolling down the hill like a ... like a Yo-Yo I guess. Ygramul seemed to be able to read minds because in the air he was already yelling out You Must Let me turn you into a ... Yo-Yo! Then wish yourself to the Ice Palace. WHY YOU Might ask because You would not be able to make it to the Ice Palace with any other kind of transportation! POOF! Atreyu found himself lying in some cold, white, soft stuff. He looked at himself. What Atreyu discovered made him want to receive the same illness that the villagers had. Atreyu had been turned into a Yo-Yo. And beside him was a bigger Yo-Yo. Thoughts quickly spun in his head. Maybe it was the giant thing the Ygramul the Yo-Yo was fighting

All of a sudden the bigger Yo-Yo slowly got up and rolled over toward Atreyu, then started to push Atreyu toward a big castle made of ... made of ice. Atreyu suddenly became dizzy, and started to fall asleep. When Atreyu [illegible] another. Atreyu tried to open up his eyes, but he couldn't. Why you might ask because he didn't have any eyes! Atreyu tried to listen through his two holes. Atreyu [illegible] overheard two munchkins huffing and puffing. After a couple of minutes, Atreyu felt himself being hoisted up. Then... SPLASH! Atreyu had been dropped into a large pool of water. Atreyu was slowly turning back to an... back to Atreyu. Then Atreyu began to lose consciousness. Atreyu again, had just blacked-out. When Atreyu came to his senses, he stood before the Great Ice Palace with a... with a Griffon at his side. When the Griffon saw Atreyu, the Griffon jumped into the sky in the speed of light, and carried Atreyu up and up into the sky and beyond the clouds. When Atreyu had reached the top of the Great Ice Palace. He was surrounded by ten guards and ten guard dogs. Atreyu looked at the Griffon the Griffon looked at him. Before Atreyu and the Griffon could move a muscle the guards and guard dog all fell to the ground gripping their stomachs crying in distress and howling in pain. Then the Griffon started acting up. This was serious. The Griffon was now clawing at his stomach with intense [illegible]. He almost tore it into shreds. Atreyu was now [illegible] away. He dashed for the door. As Atreyu drew nearer to the door with all speed. The door opened up as if it knew the Atreyu needed to get in. It was an elevator. Atreyu [illegible] the button heading downward. The door came and quickly closed. When Atreyu had reached the bottom he quickly glanced around hoping to find a cure for the villagers that beyond the Ue-Ye told him about. Atreyu started to walk forward, with he suddenly stopped. Atreyu saw a sun beam shining downwards through the sun roof, Atreyu somehow how felt that this was a trap! Atreyu cautiously picked up a stone and chucked it into the sun-beam. It had fifty spikes shot out of the wall and caught the rock in mid-air. Atreyu was now back to back against the wall sliding past the sun-beam Atreyu now relieved walked casually down the long corridor and along the hallway Atreyu started kicking stones

And right about in the middle of the hallway Atreyu kicked it for the fourth time then felt around for the rock with his foot. When he could not find it. he looked down and starring into Atreyu face was a bottomless pit. One more step would have been his last! With ease Atreyu jumped over the hole. Then he saw it, the cure for the villagers it read: PEPTO BISMAL. It was only a few feet away. Forgetting about all the traps included Atreyu ran up to the aisle and snatched the bottle, BUT! it wasn't that zillions and zillions of poison tipped darts shot out of the walls. Atreyu again dashed for the elevator dodging darts, jumping over holes, and dodging light beams. Atreyu was so busy doing all these things he did not notice the giant boulder ~~rolling~~ chasing him. UNTIL! the last minute. Atreyu leaped into the air and landed in the elevator, fumbled with the buttons, and quickly ascended. BUT! he did not stop at the doorway. He and the elevator flew up up into the sky. Atreyu reached a rubber chute and dumped the pepto-bismal into the chute. All of Fantastica was saved all because of Atreyu who in the way landed on the moon and became a famous astronaut.

The End.

JANUARY 23

Interview with Travis

Int: This is your rough copy. Do you want to use your good copy?

Travis: Ya.

Int: Did you change much in it?

Travis: Ya lots.

Int: My first question I'm going to have to ask you, I'm really curious, is why do you start nearly all your stories this way?

Travis: I just want to give them an introduction on how, like an introduction. The stories that I read usually have a small bit of the story and a page and you get the table of contents.

Int: Yes, but the author usually in the story doesn't identify himself. I'm whose the author of Neverending Story. I'm Michael Ende and I want to tell you about the story. So why do you do it that way?

Travis: Well its just my introduction.

Int: So you like to be, you want your audience to know that your the one telling the story, that's important to you?

Travis: Will no, cause just awhile ago Mr. Shelby told us about fifty lines, fifty words of introduction, so that's it.

Int: So that's what you think an introduction should be at the beginning? Now I want to talk about some of the ideas for the story. The idea that the villages had disappeared. Why did you think of that Travis? (Interviewer reads from Travis'story) They were all in the elders hut and trying to find out what was happening to them because they were ill. And they were, but they were planning a party and so they all snuck into the the elders house because they were going to have a big party for him but they all stayed because they were ill. Okay the alarm system had been shut off. Why would Atreyu bust down the door?

Travis: I wanted to put some humour into it because I thought this story would be real boring.

Int: Oh and the billion guards, humour, you thought if you had these numbers...(Reads from story) Atreyu found the .... They were lying around a giant birthday cake. Because they were sick. Okay, and they were gripping their stomachs. Now why a giant Yo-Yo. What made you decide on your main character to be a Yo Yo?

Travis: You see again humour. This is real boring 1000 words I don't know. (Shaking his head)

Int: Why do you think its boring?

Travis: To long, and then same characters, and what the topic is. I couldn't really find a good topic to start on. That's why I wanted to add a lot of humour to it.

Int: So that's why you have him saying all these things......but yet your saying this would be boring but you don't find... Do you find Neverending story boring then, in their long adventures?

Travis: Ya, sort of in a way only they're just too long. They drag.

Int: So he lived in the shape of a Yo-Yo, just more for humour?

Travis: Yugramal so I thought of something that would go for Yugramal. So he'd be a giant Yo-Yo instead of a giant spider with a whole bunch of blue hornets all over.

Int: That's in the book is it? So you've got some of your ideas from the book but changed them for your own characters. Broken ropes are just to add details.

Travis: You know Yo-Yo's the ropes break when you use them so many times.

Int: He wants to go to the ice palace, that's from....

Travis: West Edmonton Mall.

Int: Oh really, I was thinking wasn't there an ice palace in the story?

Travis: No there was a place where Ulya that's some sort of mirrors past the riddle gate.

Int: Okay from West Edmonton Mall. What Atreyu discovered made him have the same illness that the villagers had. Why?

Travis: He turned into a Yo-Yo.

Int: Poor Atreyu. So now what happens here? A big castle made of ice that's the ice castle. Why does he go into the ice?

Travis: Ice palace, okay Yugramal the Yo-Yo you know in the story there was the luck dragon. Well I have a griffin. And the griffin is being turned into a Yo-Yo and the Griffin is helping Atreyu turn back to Atreyu so he is taking him to the ice palace.

Int: (Reads from the story).

Travis: Well he's gripping their stomachs with indigestion.

Int: Now there were traps all these traps in the ice palace that he has to get through.

Travis: This is the part from Indiana Jones.

Int: Oh right, now which part in Indiana Jones.

Travis: The golden idol.

Int: Now Atreyu lands in the elevator. Why would you put an elevator?

Travis: To make it more humourous because they don't have elevators in these times.

Int: Now in your rough copy you have all these things.

Travis: My sister she was counting all the words to see if I had over a thousand.

Int: When you're doing activities like this and the other work you do for Mr. Shelby in L.A., do you think you get a chance to express yourself as much as you'd like to do?

Travis: Ya, that's why I put lots of humour because this stuff is pretty boring. 1000 words about Atreyu.

Int: No. You don't think Mr. Shelby was very realistic. What were his directions for this?

Travis: 1000 words using Atreyu as a story.

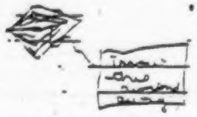
Int: That's it, he didn't give you anything else? Did it have to be a quest or an adventure?

Travis: No, just make up a story using 1000 words.

byRoxanne

Atreyu And His Quest For Love

One day long ago, a handsome warrior named Atreyu was searching for his powerful hunting sword. ~~[illegible]~~ He came across ~~the~~ a small little mirror that his mother had given him before she had passed away. His mother was a very beautiful lady who always ~~they~~ thought of others, and not her self! Atreyu hated the thought of his mother dead, so he didn't think about it much. He looked in the little mirror and thought he looked old. He knew there was something missing in his life but he could not think of what it was. He had every-thing a warrior could have, he had swords, knives, power, health, and many other things, then he thought of his friend Sequanuy, since he thought, Sequoany had a love and Atreyu didn't. So, Atreyu started thinking of how wonderful it would be to be married! He thought of a beautiful young woman with long beautiful hair and gorgeous eyes, oh Atreyu could not bear it any longer he had to find a love quick. So Atreyu decided to go to the wiseman of Ancy he'd have the answer. The wise man told Atreyu that only a warrior has to go through a quest to find a Love Atrey had the quest of finding the Love timesd. So atreyu set off to find the aimena. Sure enough he encountered many enemies on the way like Grumpie the Frog, Stone-the Tree. But then again he met many new friends like Stone-Lasa Starfman, and Teeny Nicy. Then he ~~[illegible]~~ found the dimond he read the directions and it said,



Atreyu thought about these instructions a ~~[illegible]~~ minute and did it anyway. Then Suddenly A gorgeous woman just like he imagined appeared. So they ran off and got married and lived happily ever after

The End

The Fire amulet

By Curtis

The radiant sun was just about up and the sky was a radiantly blue. Almost like the scenery was painted. The horizon was laced with a silver lining. It was a graceful morning and a energetic one. All the stores had opened down 2nd street and the paperboy had delivered the papers on time.

The town clock struck Nine. With a jump Atreyu awoke and crawled out of bed. He opened the window and was greeted by joyful beams of light. He could smell fresh steaming bread just coming out of the bakers oven, so fluffy and hot. He could see the crystal clear icicles had begun to melt. The water began to drip down the icicles very slowly almost clockwork like.

Laughter came from inside the castle walls - castle nightmare (The Devils Domain) The Demon acknowleged his followers that every 100,000,000 yrs a portal would will be opened in the mountains of Inferno and we will conquer all of Zind. Tonight at twelve the portal will open and... he paused and gave the crowd a fiendish smile. Darkchild (The Devils son) gave an outburst of jealousy. He told his father and I quote. The doomed you speak father, My evil shall conquer Zind. I challenge y to the death. With that Darkchild grabbed the [illegible] of limbo and charged at his father. The Devil ducked and clawed at Darkchild's hip tak, some flesh off. Darkchild hissed in vain. The moved and lost balance and tripped it was Darkchild's chance. He thrusted the sw through the devil's heart. Blood flew against the wall and an aguard who melted and sizzled to his death.

Ralu (the town wizard) came bursting into Atreyu's hut. Atreyu asked him what was the matter. Ralu told him to pack his stuf he'd explain later. They mounted horses and began to ride out of Idown Town the plains of Eltala. On the way the wizard, Ralu explained about the portal from hell. Atreyu had to destroy it but the only way he could was to collect five amulets. Each one was guarded by a demon king. The portal to hell is in the mountain of Inferno.

Evening fell as they approached Rotil. Behind a clump of trees were two figures. One a dingtrit a very large animal which is pink and black. They are very muscular and their breath molten slag. They also, like any other but can fly. The other figure a skelt. They are skeletons that can shoot lasers from their hands and they are very wise with ~~knowledge~~ knowledge. and are very grumpy. He was dressed in a business suit which was black and white. Rabu introduced them quickly, the dingbat Bo-Bo the skull George. He told Atreyu they would help on his quest. Rabu gave him some ammo a map and a sword.

Without hesitation they set out on the journey. It was dark by the time they reached Volta. Bo-Bo wanted rest, Atreyu seconded the idea George just muttered something! They landed with a thump! George started to complain that Bobo landed to hard. B.B. tells George to go and get the "bag of [illegible]" What broke out was a fight. Atreyu broke it up and told them to act more mature. George just stuck out tongue.

The chums headed into town were they had a hardy meal and a good rest. They decided to get some information. They were about to head into a bar, when the clock struck midnight! The stars were engulfed by a redish black clouds. The wind really got violent and dazzling lightning lit up the sky the thunder boomed louder than a jumbo jet. Then demons dived into the lake of death. Atreyu thought to himself the first amulet. He reached down the dock and put on a scuba diving suit. And dove in!. The Lake was murky and the bottom was like quicksand. Atreyu could see a light coming straight towards him He went toward it

As Atreyu was about to turn away. a sharp claw scraped across his back. He. screamed but the water engulfed all his efforts. A loud laugh bellowed through the lake of death. It was abominion a king demon Atreyu pulled out his . It splashed in the water. As abominion jumped at him Atreyu cut off his head. A bit of green blood bubbled to the top of the lake. Atreyu took the medallion from abominion.

As soon as he got out of the lake he told Bo-Bo and Benny to get ready to leave. They pack some food and water.

Fifteen minutes they were off and in the air. Atreyu and Benny braced themselves from getting blown off Bo-Bo. The night had a sense of evil in it. Nothing moved from the ground but the trees getting blown from side to side.

Screeches of remorse and curses came from the deepest part of the inferno. The exodus (Darkchild's realm) was right in the middle of these mountains. Darkchild paced from one end of his throne room to the other. Curse that Atreyu I must stop was Darkchild had said for half an hour. Guard go get me my demon warriors Darkchild kept on thinking where is that guard. Just then the guard came back with two short slovenly looking demons. DarkChild handed them a amulet and told them to [illegible] Atenge. They answered like this [illegible] O.K. [illegible]. Darkchild asked there name. They replied [illegible] and [illegible]. [illegible] [illegible] called he [illegible] Darkchild!

The wind had cooled down and the thunder had stopped. But it was still raining quite hard. The two [illegible] had set up camp.

When Bo-Bo awoke next morning he found the fresh [illegible] [illegible] next to him. After [illegible] [illegible] filled up to [illegible] [illegible] they were off.

As they [illegible] the [illegible] land of [illegible] an explosion of flying debris at Bo-Bo and [illegible] them to [illegible]. As they recovered from the [illegible] a rocket came hurtling at them. Bo-Bo turned and melted the rocket with molten slag. The [illegible] All of a sudden two [illegible] headed full [illegible] at Bo-Bo. It was [illegible] and [illegible]. Bo-Bo flew up [illegible] [illegible] came [illegible] [illegible] not looking where he was going, he collided with [illegible]! The amulet flew into [illegible] Damage hand.

Now for the last [illegible]. A cold chill ran through everyones back. Bo-Bo headed straight for the mountains of Inferno. After two hours they were well in the mountains and Darkchilds realm could be seen. It was a sick sight. It was made out of bones and skulls. They stopped by the main gate. Atenge said hid up in and [illegible] two [illegible] min. later fifteen [illegible] [illegible] in up.

Atasyn sneaked it in. He went down a hall way and went up some stairs. He turned the knob on the door and there stood Darkchild. I've been waiting for you to come...

They had eaten and now were getting some shut eye. God knows they needed it. A loud crash had awoken Atasyn. He saw Zo-Zo and Damyn were still asleep So he went to check on it himself. He had walked a hundred meters when a huge man jumped [illegible]. He turned around to see a giant demon with a mutilated face. It was Bonecrusher the [illegible] of them all. Bonecrusher began to squeeze Atasyn. Bonecrusher [illegible] with a mutilated smile [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] or scream. Half of his arm felt numb, he [illegible] just when Atasyn was going to breathe his last breath... A man had [illegible] a hole right through Bone crusher's chest Bone Crusher screamed and fell to the ground. Atasyn saw that Damyn was behind Bonecrusher he had the amulet in his hand. Atasyn thanked him and they went back to sleep. [illegible] came with a [illegible] gun and fired at Zo-Zo. Zo-Zo dodged it and flew up into the distance. [illegible] turned toward Atasyn and [illegible] his gun. He muttered something Ha your friend has left you, ha! Zo-Zo flew down at great [illegible] and hit him. The medallion went flying off just onto Atasyn's hand. [illegible] went flying into toxic waste and melted into nothing. Then they set off to the temple of [illegible].

By the time they got there it was 12:30 lunchtime. Zo-Zo [illegible] the water Atasyn pulled his sword it shined with some strange light. Darkchild pulled out the sword of [illegible]. The two swords met with a crash. Darkchild pushed back Atasyn, causing him to lose his balance. Darkchild pointed his sword at Atasyn. Atasyn moved, Then threw his dagger into Darkchild's leg. Darkchild jumped at Atoya and clawed at his face. They dripped blood. Atoya charged Darkchild throwing the sword at him. The light twinkled as it flew through the air. It went through Darkchild's heart. Darkchild was dead. Atoya ripped the medallion off Darkchild's neck. He spun behind him. He saw the portal. He threw the amulet in the portal. The portal vanished, he ran to Bo-Bo and George. They all left watching the dropping explosion. They [illegible] back on Bo-Bo finally Zink was saved!

The end

January 23

Interview with Curtis

Curtis: Well we had to go to our friends and I hadn't had 1/4 of it done and I had to go to my friends. Considering how long it turned out to be. I finished it at my friends but it wasn't done so I came home and I was up till 11:00 doing it and I woke up at 5:00 to redo it in pen. Huh, I hated it.

Int: So what's the moral of the story?

Curtis: Do your homework soon.

Int: Well that's the way I do it with my classes at university. It doesn't get better.

Curtis:

Int: Well let's talk about why you did certain things in here. Why did you pick this theme, setting, town,?

Curtis: Okay, now this is neat. I did it for a special reason. That's how I felt when I woke up like Atreyu. I jumped up to do the story, I felt powerful. I jumped out of bed, opened the window, opened the door, closed it again and that's how it looked when I was looking out the window.

Int: You've done a good job of describing it. You did it at first or when you started the first time. Sunday, fluffy bread do you have a bakery near your house?

Curtis: Something I just thought of.

Int: Why castle, why castle nightmare.

Curtis: Oh, I got that off a book I heard about castle nightmare. Well it wasn't castle nightmare, was castle something maybe, it wasn't nightmare. I know that it was a Stephen King book. Stephen King or Steve Jackson.

Int: Mountains of inferno.

Curtis: The inferno's from my comics. I pretty well got this story off my comic from X Factor and all that about an inferno and you have the demons that come and then destroy New York thrashing it out. Then later the X Men destroy the demons.

Int: And why zink?

Curtis: I just thought of that.

Int: Dark Child?

Curtis: Darkchild - Golden Child and you know the Eddie Murphy movie and also there was a new mutant devil child but she's good. Like its weird she gets really mad and horns come out of her and she's got this sort of limbo but she's good.

Int: Now you picked Limbo.

Curtis: Ya the story of Limbo.

Int: From that whole thing.

Curtis: Ya.

Int: (reads story).

The quest for the five amulet. Why five amulets? Amulets comes from. Why did you pick that, because he wears an amulet in the story?

Curtis: Oh, no, remember my Super Wonder Boy well he just goes around. He collects, he doesn't collect amulets he just goes a few places and has to kill all these demons and stuff. So I just thought he had to get amulets from, its kind a like Wonder Boy.

Int: Bats right, you have some weird types of bat creatures.

Curtis: Ya, I have Dingbats.

Int: And they are skeletons?

Curtis: And the other guy George is a skeleton.

Int: Those are just out of your head?

Curtis: Ya, I have pictures of both of them.

Int:: That you made that you drew, and what's Bo Bo.? Why Bo Bo?

Curtis: I think I wanted to make him good so I gave him a good name and he's kind of cute. Do you know why George?

Int: Why?

Curtis: Because at night, this is really interesting, when I go to sleep like the light shines in my basement window, and I'm all by myself in the window. My dad hasn't put in a door yet. He's just built it right. Well I'm sleeping there and this light shines on my posters and it looks like a skeleton in the dark. You can't see anything but the light and it looks like a skeleton and I used to be really scared, then later I go the only way I'm going to conquer George, I made up that name George so I added it in the story.

Int: Let me see what else you've got here. You put in lots of details. Why do you write this way, do you model yourself after anyone?

Curtis: Oh, yes, definitely.

Int: Did you follow anything, did you copy anything, have a mind set that I want it to be like this book?

Curtis: Well I'm kind of like George Lucas, he puts in so many so many ideas just in one, millions of ideas just in one thing like Willow. That had been Peter Pan that had been Star Wars. It had been so many things, Indiana Jones all into one.

Int: Bone Crusher?

Curtis: Is a guy from inferno.

Int: A comic?

Curtis: Inferno was a thing that had happened and it was in X Factor comics. It was in just about all comics. One of the hob goblins used to be a man. He got turned into a devil so now so these guys they go, is it Bone Crusher? He was like, the inferno wore off but Bone Crusher was still a demon and he had grown a lot bigger. He was, and everything looked so sick so I decided to put him in it.

Int: Sort of limbo came from a comic. He and Dark Child have this big fight right. Now in Neverending Story Atreyu can't really use his power. He's not allowed to use the amulet. Does he have a sword in that or not? No, he doesn't use weapons or anything. Now why did you decide to have Atreyu different here?

Curtis: Well I kind of like those kinds of quests, you know, Dungeons and Dragons. There's always weapons and stuff.

Int: Who's in this picture?

Curtis: That's one of the demons.

Int: Alright, I have a couple of questions. What did Mr. Shelby tell you to do for this? Did I ask you that already?

Curtis: He told us to do one with no dialogue and it had to be 1000 words long but mine's over 1000 words long.

Int: That's all? He let you have freedom. Do you feel Curtis that in Mr. Shelby's class that you get to do all the things that you like to do your not just trying to please him by doing things totally for him?

Curtis: Both, you try to please your teacher.

Int: If you were thinking what would be one of the ways to please Mr. Shelby in there. What's his thing?

Curtis: Literature, like memorizing Romeo and Juliette.

Int: You think that's his favorite thing.

Curtis: Well, ya he loves literature word roots and so, and mythology sometimes he gets me sick.

Int: Do you find that boring sometimes when he goes off on his tangents.

Curtis: Ya and your (acts like he is sleeping)

Int: Nodding off.

Curtis: Your writing down all this stuff. You have to write down so much in mythology and you just (nods off).

Int: That's because he's pretty excited about it.

Curtis: And sometimes not all the time. Don't tell Mr. Shelby when he's writing I go, I look like I'm writing well sometimes but I copy it down later.

Int: Do you find are you using some of those words, Do they help you? Do you think you're learning a lot from, them from the roots and stuff? Do you use them?

Curtis: Ya, I don't use them in everyday conversation but when your reading books. Most writers they go major word. Now I understand most of it like a Mortician. I go ya.

Int: So you are using the word roots to help you figure out what the words are? I think that's what his intention is that you can use them later if you don't understand it now.

Atrevu's Mission By Jeannette

In Oklahoma, 1988 there was a little boy about a metre ann a half tall. He was about twelve years old. His name was Atrevu. He lived with his widow mother, Igraine. Atrevu's father died when Atrevu was seven, and he was left with pictures and a ragedy house. His house was just one room, with a table and two blankets. They also had a gas lamp which rested peacefully on their creaky floor. Atrevu's mother worked very hard as a waitress in dirty bar. So the two of them worked hard to buy only the things they needed most. Atrevu enjoys a good novel with action and fantasy. But he could only get that excitement in school books.

At five o'clock in the afternoon, Atrevu was digging holes in their backyard with a small stick that he had found beside their house. Suddenly, Atrevu felt something hard in the ground. What could this object of some sort be? Atrevu tried to pull out the object and succeeded in pulling out a bottle. Inside the bottle ther was a letter which had "Atrevu" printed neatly on the side. Atrevu quickly pulled out the letter and unrolled it. The letter was beautiful; it had been rewritten over in a fine black ink. Atrevu started to read the letter, it said:

In a land far, far away there's a place called Fantastica where the grass is green and the flowers are blooming. Well, now you have to think about something, something really strange. It's the people in Fantastica; they have a big problem and it has to be solved quickly. Fantasticans were people who were kind and gentle. But now they have terrible tempers. For instance, if you were talking on the bus, those people around you would push and kick you until you left the bus. Alright, now that, that is out of the way, Atrevu, your mission is to seek the lady in a black cape, she can restore peace and harmony to the kingdom. This magical women's name is Atrilly, she was said to of disappeared for quite a long time. Please hurry in getting here before there is no Fantastica left. Thousands of robberies and deaths are occuring. In fact, a boy named Greg was chased by four bullies who caught up with him and eat him up with metal bars, found off of shopping carts.

(Atrevu stopped reading, the situation associating with Greg reminded of the treatment he received at school himself. Atrevu was not exactly the type of strong person that he wanted to be).

When Atrilly ruled Fantastica, it was the greatest place to visit. Things have changed completely ever since the disappearance of her. There have been, riots, break-ins and the ever so popular disappearances.

(Suddenly, Atrevu's mother called him into their house. He dropped his letter and ran through their back door. His mother had told him to go to the Supermarket to buy some milk. Atrevu's mother handed him a five dollar bill. She d told him that with the extra change he could buy whatever he wanted. Atrevu was about to hug his mother, but she stopped him and made him leave before it became dark outside. Atrevu hurried on his way to the store.

Atrevu soon had arrived at the Supermarket. He went to what he called the, "cow section" and picked up a carton of, "Skim" milk and then headed for the cashier. Atrevu paid for the milk, which was one dollar only. He then headed, with his milk, over to the book section. Atrevu searched the shelf for a book that he would like. Suddenly, Atrevu saw a brown book with, "Fantastica" neatly printed on the hard front cover. Atrevu picked up the book and admired it for about ten minutes. Then, all of a sudden, he searched for a price tag. The blue price tag had three dollars stamped on it. Then Atrevu, as happy as can be, ran over to he cashier, and bought the book. Now, Atrevu had a good book, milk, and a dollar to give his mom.

Atrevu had started on his way home, he thought that he should take the short-cut home. Suddenly, Atrevu heard some sounds coming from the bushes. He felt a weird feeling creeping up his body. Atrevu, started to walk again, and was stopped by another sound. He started to run as fast as he could. Atrevu noticed that he was a good, fast runner. As he ran, Atrevu noticed he was being chased by four boys, running with sticks in their hands, just like the letter he had found. Atrevu started to panic as he passed by a place never had seen before. Was he lost? The twelve-year old very quickly ran into a bush and sat there silently. He could hear the boys calling the name, "Greg." Atrevu knew he wasn't in Oklahoma anymore!...

Atrevu waited until the, "coast was clear" to run "home free." Atrevu, all of a sudden noticed a fresh blood-trail leading to somewhere unknown...

He followed the nasty looking blood-trail and found out that there was an injured human lying flat on the ground, mourning for help. The man looked farmiliar, almost like his father. But Atrevu knew that that couldn't be true, for his father was dead. Atrevu knelt down and started to tend to the man's wounds with leaves and mud. Although, Atrevu kept on thinking of his father, Jeff, who he loved and cherished through all his life. Atrevu, then asked kindly who t man was. He soon knew that the man was his father. Atrevu quickly introduced himself to the man as he helped him onto his feet. Atrevu thought that his own father couldn't remember him at all. But after all the man remembered Atrevu and gave him a good hug. The two of them started to go westwardly towards the Gnomic country. The two of them talked and talked for a long time. As they were going along, Atrevu's dad felt a sharp pain in his back. Soon enough there were three arrows plunged into his back, squirting blood everywhere. Atrevu's dad soon dropped to the ground in more pain. Shortly after that, Atrevu's dad died instantly.

With tears running down his face, Atrevu started running as fast as he could. Noone was following Atrevu so stopped running. Atrevu's stomach growled eagerly for food. He dug through his pockets finding two letters. One letter was the one Atrevu found in a bottle. The second one was one from his father. Atrevu quickly unfolded the letter and started to read it. The letter said:

Atrevu, my son, go to the first house you pass by and there you will find who you are searching for. It was nice seeing you again. I wrote all the letters you received. When you find the lovely, Atrilly take her to the Fantastican church and sprinkle holy water all over her. Only do what I have said if nothing else works...

Love, DAD

Atrevu stopped reading and cried even harder. He couldn't believe it! His father was alive again, and then he died in his face! Atrevu, feeling really man-like, went up to the door of the first house he found.

He knocked on the door and waited for an answer. The door opened with a sharp squeak. Atrevu slowly, but surely walked in. The house was pitch dark inside, but Atrevu felt someone come up to him and force him to sit down. The lights flickered on as a lady in a black cape stood in front of him. The lady asked Atrevu who he was and what was his business there. He answered everything she asked him. Atrevu found out that the lady's name was Atrilly. Atrilly agreed that she would go with Atrevu on his journey to Fantastica. The two sat down to dinner as Atrilly told Atrevu about her problems.

The two left for Fantastica in the morning and arrived that evening. Atrevu took Atrilly to the Moving mall and tried to introduce Atrilly to the gathering crowd. No matter how much Atrevu said, the violence continued. It seemed that Fantasticans no longer wanted Atrilly. Since the plan didn't work, Atrevu took Atrilly to the church. He sprinkled holy water on Atrilly. Suddenly, all the Fantasticans came to join Atrevu and Atrilly in the church.

At this moment Atrevu's mother was waking him up from a long sleep. Atrevu kept thinking of Fantastica and saved it. From now on Fantastica will always be ne to remember!...

January 23

Interview with Jeannette

Int:	I just want to talk to you a little bit about your story. Some of the things that you have put in it. This is really well done. I enjoyed it. Why did he live with his widowed mother and no father? What made you think of writing this way that he had a father that had died? Did you get that idea from anything?
Jeannette:	I wanted to, like in the real book the mother died. I didn't want that so I just....
Int:	So you got the idea from Bastian's situation. She worked hard as a waitress in a dirty bar. What made you decide on that?
Jeannette:	Well I couldn't think of any other jobs for her.
Int:	So you think that would be an awful thing to do, work in a dirty bar?
Jeannette:	uh huh!
Int:	And he enjoyed novels with action and fantasy. Does that come from Bastian liking to read that sort of thing or yourself?
Jeannette:	Myself!
Int:	As he was digging holes, he found something. Why did you decided on a bottle here.
Jeannette:	Oh like in some shows they have a bottle with a note inside? I didn't know. The letter was from his Dad.

Int: Now this idea of Fantastica it comes from the book and you decided to stick with it?

Jeannette: I like the name, its good.

Int: The fact that the little boy was in this world and Fantastica is another is that because of the story that you decided to do that?

Jeannette: Uh huh!

Int: Oh, I know what it was. Why did you decide that everyone in Fantastica would be mean and evil?

Jeannette: Well for one thing, I planned it out at the beginning so that I would have an easy ending and my story, like when they're evil you see later on it was by some fault from a certain fault and then he had to find the Childlike Empress and Atreyu. And that's why they are mean, but they used to be nice.

Int: Because of the change that's happened sort of like with the nothing taking over and eating things, okay. So that comes from ideas from the story. So when Atreyu it was the greatest place to visit, that would have been like the Childlike Empress. The five dollar bill to go, the cow section. Is that what you call it when you go to the store?

Jeannette: Well I like some comedy so when I go to the store, I say to my mom I'll meet you in the cow section.

Int: So the idea of Fantastic being printed on the book is like Sabastian finding that book?.

Jeannette: Uh huh!

Int: He felt a weird feeling. Now why did you decide to do it this way?

Jeannette: Well like I wanted a way for him to get into the story, into Fantastica, so he walks home and he hears sounds. He sort of goes through a time zone or something and he doesn't realize it until some people call a different name not his.

Int: Now your idea would that have come from how Sabastian entered the story?

Jeannette: You know how Bastian sees himself reading a book in there but I like him to do much more. So I put Atreyu to be in Fantastica so he could help Fantastica.

Int: Why did you choose Oklahoma?

Jeannette: I just well Oklahoma, it, it matched with the scene. It seemed like a good place to put him in so.

Int: Where have you heard of Oklahoma?

Jeannette: In the States and I've always wanted to visit there too!

Int: So there was an injured man that he found that was his dad right?

Jeannette: I sort of wanted it to be those green people in the story. The gnomics, the leaf people.

Int: Were they evil in the story?

Jeannette: No, I don't think so, they were just hiding.

Int: Now he has two letters. One that his Dad had given him and then he goes to find a lady in a black cape. Now why did you put her in a black cape Jeannette?

Jeannette: Well I sometimes watch movies and they have a woman usually, and sometimes a horror and she turns around in a black cape and it sort of gets to you.

Int: And some evil a little bit. This is a happy ending. So he woke up from his sleep. Was he really dreaming?

Jeannette: I'm not really sure no more because he was in reality but after that, I guess Atreyu put him to sleep so that he would wake up in a happy ending.

Int: And why did you go to a church Jeannette, just out of curiosity?

Jeannette: Well, I watched a horror movie this weekend, and in order to get rid of him they used holy water so why not use that.

Int: And what's a "moving mall" I couldn't understand?

Jeannette: Well it is supposed to be a shopping mall, I couldn't figure out a good name for it.

Int: So you called it a "moving mall". How what did Mr. Shelby tell you to do for this story? What were his directions?

Jeannette: No dialogue, 1000 words, it has to have a good plot. He said we could just dream with it as long as there was no dialogue.

Int: And it had to have a Atreyu in it. Did it have to be a quest or adventure?

Jeannette: He told me that it had to be a mission.

Int: Okay, so it had to be a mission of some sort. Now when you do these types of activities for Mr. Shelby or actually any activity, do you think you have a lot of freedom to put what you want in. Things from yourself or do you follow what he wants?

Jeannette: I felt sort of bad about no dialogue cause it gets confusing because you can't tell, and the father said and you have to put everything in past tense, like I told him.

Int: But for other things in the class do you feel you get a chance to talk about yourself and lots of things you do rather than what Mr. Shelby wants.

Jeannette: Ya.

APPENDIX D

FORMAL INTERVIEW WITH MR. SHELBY ABOUT HIS LANGUAGE ARTS PROGRAM

INTERVIEW WITH MR. SHELBY - OCTOBER 27

Int: We talked the first day about your language arts program why you do, the things you do. But maybe you don't mind just going through that again. Why you choose your approach.

Mr. Shelby: Well in Grade six you have a long period of time to do language arts, an hour and a half a day. So you break it up so there is a lot of variety and I like to hit some spots almost every day. I like to give them insights into words, where words come from so that words are making sense. That's part of my word root study. Plus I also give them insights into words to show that words are fun like muscle comes from latin musculus meaning little mouse. When you flex your muscle the romans thought they saw a little mouse. I always do a word root study everyday.

Int: How did you how did you get into doing that Mr. Shelby? Is it something you have done since you began teaching or is it something that evolved from your teaching?

Mr. Shelby: I think it evolved from my teaching. I always remember my teachers in elementary in junior high and senior high giving me etymology of words and it didn't make a lot of sense then but then later on it did.

Int: Are you finding that, do you see an increases in the students vocabulary at all? Have you over the years from the beginning of the year to the end that these words are coming up in their writing?

Mr. Shelby: Yes, a lot of them make a conscious attempt to use them and I'll even have a few students come back and visit and they'll say I was doing some science and these words were coming up. Because I knew the words like ped means foot I could spot the word pediatrist in my notes or on the blackboard.

Int: Because I'm just wondering, I'm thinking that with my study that because it's not longitudinal that I might not see that. I'm hoping that through some of their work. But I'm wondering if you had actually noticed?

Mr. Shelby: Ya, its kind of an isolated way to study words like it's also valuable to pick a word out of a text or story and work with that particular word as well.

Int: I notice you have your word lists. Now you give them lists each week of word roots?

Mr. Shelby: Of word roots I guess we do about a root a week depending on where we are and how sharp they are.

Int: Now they have to write sentences with those words I've noticed them doing some work but I...

Mr. Shelby: They copy the list of words and I give them a set of sentences and they fill in the right word in the context of the sentence.

Int: Okay, and then you work on it during the week.

Mr. Shelby: Right we banter back and forth. For example, I've got sort of a morbid corner in my classroom and I'll say isn't that morbid or some student says a joke and its kind of a little off colour I'll say is that a morbid joke so we'll play with words throughout the year.

Int: Okay, see I have notice the play but I'm missing gaps. I find that frustrating for myself, that's why I'm asking you.

Mr. Shelby: Right, to give you an example here like pedantic and ped based on foot ped, ah, I'll be lecturing and if I'm being very routine and very dry I'll stop and say am I being pedantic here, ya. Then I'll explain what that means so will make play from there to another word. Or sometimes we'll be in an assembly and one of the speakers will use a word that we have covered and they'll all look at me and they recognize the word. I know its especially if we have fun with the word if we play in class, they'll all give me a big smile in assembly because they can spot it.

Int: Okay for your creative writing I know you did those stories with them. Do you do a lot of, You have them do a rough draft and you have them do a good copy. Do you do a lot of work with them have you done work with them on the processes. Of editing or brainstorming?

Mr. Shelby: Well, I try to stress something different each time we do writing. This time what I tried to stress was how you how you prove that the scene is scary not by just saying it was a scary scene. You use descriptive language to prove it I read a bit of Stephen King quite gory actually I could have been a little more careful with my choice there and one parent complained.

Int: I know you said, but I wouldn't worry about that. I think they're great. I've just been reading through them.

Mr. Shelby: I saw some good work there.

Int: Sure.

Mr. Shelby: Some were quite boring.

Int: That's where their heads are at at this age.

Mr. Shelby: Ya, that's right especially at Halloween time. But that's the approach I take each time I try to build on a particular skill and mind you there is a lot of mechanical work to work on, and I do that by marking what they have done and I'll put it on the blackboard after.

Int: Like I say, I get bits and pieces of what you are doing and your novel study. You talked a bit about your Neverending Story.

Mr. Shelby: Ya, Its from my own experience as a student the thing that stuck in my mind was in grade nine I had this teacher who did a thorough study in literature of a particular story of an epic poem called....... The sailor with the Albatross.

Int: Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner.

Mr. Shelby: Right, he did every line in detail and he pulled out the theme and he talked about ideas and that turned me on. And to this day I still remember him talking about that. That's the only one I remember and then I read this book The Neverending Story in which the boy in the first part, the boy is reading the story up in the attic and all through the story he is starting to realize that the nothing is coming and wiping everything out and the solution to the problem is that he give the princess a new name, the empress a new name. And finally he realizes that until he gets actively involved in the story, and gives her a new name and gets his mind working that closely in the story and he finally gives her a new name and he ends up right in the book itself. And that's the second part of the book and then he gets very philosophical. I appreciate the philosophy like he is now in the story and he got, he becomes an emperor and he's got the power to do whatever he wants. Any wish he wants he has the power to do so he, I could go to a lot of detail. It's a very detailed study but the idea is...

Int: You want the children to gain

Mr. Shelby: Well the thing is this book is when you read a book about yourself and you're only day dreaming in the story you're fulfilling your wishes and you are finding out what you really are. What you really want out of life.

Int: Now again, do you notice a change from the beginning of th year to the end of the year usually with your students that they are getting more involved with their reading? If you do so what kind of things do you see?

Mr. Shelby: Well, we do a lot of reading and parents tell me that a lot of parents tell me and this is not to brag but a lot of parents say that the children read a lot more now. They are always reading. Parents of kids have said "you know my kid never read before now he reads a lot". So because of those kinds of comments and because kids seem interested when they talk to me about the stories I just continue to study a fair amount of novels especially those kinds I like I prefer the fantasies where you are fantasizing and you see magic occur.

Int: I notice, is it because of this particular group you've got that you are doing more assigned type of work? Would you normally do more group work with them? Have them act out parts of the story?

Mr. Shelby: I do break away from that regular blackboard routine and we do activities to draw out the book. For example an activity coming up was acting out the scene of the three hags at the cottage and tormenting those people by threatening to become toads. I was going to get the kids to do that.

Int: Okay, and you're not doing a lot of group work. Get together in a group and do this or do that. Is that because of this class?

Mr. Shelby: That's part of it.

Int: Have you done that in the past I guess is what I am saying with your kids?

Mr. Shelby: Well, in group work we would do skits perhaps based on the novel and the language arts activities like putting on a radio show. Like a good morning Millwoods program. Ah, that kind of work. We would share ideas and give each other parts do some of that and putting on skits.

Int: Do you think you have all the kids with you when you're doing your novel?

Mr. Shelby: No, you never do.

Int: That doesn't concern you?

Mr. Shelby: No, but I try to keep friendly with them. Oh, it concerns me that's why I am standing on my head all day.

Int: No but concern you to the point that you also believe that your not going to have them with you. It's not that you have forgotten about them. You're trying to draw them in and keep them with you.

Mr. Shelby: Oh, definitely, I know the board game will have all of their attention so that part of the activity is reaching everyone.

Int: How do you evaluate the whole thing?

Mr. Shelby: What I'm doing with this? The novel study? Okay, the board game is one activity they are supposed to um, base the board game on incidents in the story. Like we talked this morning about that incident in the cottage with the hags. How would you treat that in your board game, as a bit of a challenge for somebody coming in to the game? I'll give them a mark based on how much of the novel they really have used for the game and then...

Int: Are you collecting those questions you are giving them?

Mr. Shelby: Yes, that's journals. We collect journals regularly to check them over and correct grammar.

Int: I'm, that's something I'll have to look at more closely with those four students. How reflective are they getting with those quotations? Because some of them are pretty powerful quotations and take a lot of digging you know.

Mr. Shelby: Well there are students like Curtis and Jeannette who will say something quite profound, about how they are reacting to that statement. In other kids ~~its~~ gone over or its sitting there someplace and they will work on it someday.

Int: Okay, those area going to be the types of questions I'm going to be looking at very carefully.

Mr. Shelby: You should actually take kids individually just take to anybody.

Int: I am wondering if you would allow me to come an extra day say Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday or would that be too much?

Mr. Shelby: No, that's fine it's no problem.

Int: Because I am finding that I am getting too many gaps between what you have done on Tuesday and what you have done on Thursday. And what that may mean is coming a shorter period of time. I wouldn't be here as long.

Mr. Shelby: Come in Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday.

Int: I'll come in and collect my data because look at this morning is almost gone and I still haven't interviewed, I'd like to talk to Roxanne and Travis and dig into their heads a little bit to get to know them. Even sitting down with their work. Your so prolific in there.

Mr. Shelby: A fun thing we do when we do their novel series is that we collect the sayings of Gurki and we play with this. We for example, "Oh mighty prince Gurki is sorry and now he will be smacked on his poor tender head with the strong hands of his great-lord" and we collect these and we develop a sort of poem based on this that we say if you miss your homework. "Oh mighty teacher" and they substitute the name and thy half to stand and recite it and its part of class discipline and you having a bit of humiliation but they are also enjoying it and we're making continued allusions to the stories. We do a continual fantasy in there based on the novels we are reading and ideas we are bringing up.

Int: I'm amazed Mr. Shelby at how integrated your classroom is.

Mr. Shelby: Well, you know its based on The Neverending Story. That's where a lot of the ideas come from. I'm just trying to find a good question.

Int: How do you, What's your background and how long have you been teaching? Has this evolved through your teaching?

Mr. Shelby: Ya, I think so.

Int: You've become integrated you haven't been taught this one method all along.

Ken: Na, I just picked it up. Eighteen years and I still have a long way to go.

Int: Oh, I don't know how you can go any further.

Mr. Shelby: When I've got them all right there (shows palm of hand)

Int: That's June.

Mr. Shelby: Ya, but they start getting

Int: I keep trying to give you hope, you are starting to despair I don't want you to despair.

Mr. Shelby: No actually, I'm having a good time with the kids I tease a lot and they like it and I like it too. I'm just trying to find a good question. The water of life this is such an incredibly symbolic story this Neverending Story.

Int: Do you do it with the kids?

Mr. Shelby: Oh yes, I'm doing this with them later. Because it's pretty heavy duty stuff. Such a philosophical story but there's a particular part of the book where he ends up in a picture mine. He's trying to get back until he finds the answers to life he can't go back home and one of the parts of the story is he's in a picture mine and he's shovelling through these pictures of his past trying to find the right pictures and trying to put some meaning into his life. But in the end of the chapter, they have to find the water of life, and uh. Actually I could spend an hour just talking about this but I'm just trying to find a particular spot here. The picture mine "each picture is a dream image forgotten dreams that live on in Fantastica deep in the earth." He doesn't know who to love. What he really is missing in his character is the ability to love, that's what he is missing. He's trying to find himself in the story and he became cruel and powerful and he found that didn't work and he finally finds in the story that what he really was missing was just love and compassion. Because he's kind of a chunky little guy and kids picked on him.

Int: I know I have read it but it is really vague so I must read it so I can relate to you and your philosophy of teaching children. Do you do any story structure like authors intent and that sort of stuff too?

Mr. Shelby: Oh sure, in particular when we study the shorter stories in the class readers and we start getting very specific about what a story is. It has a beginning a rising tension and a climax and we try to pick out what the author is trying to do with it. Where is he taking us? That all comes out. My background in University was Literature and whenever I see an opening for anything to do with that.....

Int: The one thing that struck me was that Neverending Story is a quest story. Well Taran too. When you're looking at the hero and you could do a whole focus on that.

Mr. Shelby: There's so much you could bring out of these stories. In the one we are doing right now. The three hags are just about to turn into toads and finally he tells us that he is a friend of this Cal Dabron who is this layman. They know that man they found him in a marsh in a little basket as a baby. Then we start making allusions like in mythology there are in written records a similar story. Somebody finds a baby in a basket.

Int: The Moses story.

Mr. Shelby: I always bring these things in.

Int: Do you find a big change in what they are reading in their free time, like say for choosing in library time as the year goes on?

Mr. Shelby: Not really, not specifically. Some kids are coming to me and are showing me novels like they are reading right now. The fantasy stories. I've had a few students showing me their fantasy stories, they are taking out.

Int: Yes, because I was walking around the classroom sort of noting what they had on their desks.

Mr. Shelby: And the girls are picking out the love stories. That's good they're aimed at them.

Int: The other thing that I haven't seen because I think you work on it in the afternoons are you having them write some music or work with rhythm of language and that sort of thing.

Mr. Shelby: Oh, in music we study music theory by, and show them note value and in doing that they have to programme the computer. And they program in drum patterns. And they make an orchestral background for singing and now in language arts what we do, we attempt to use those and they build the right rhythm poems, Raps and they perform them. We've tried to put that together with the rhythm machine, but their rhythms break down. But we do rhythm poems. Just to build on this and connect the two together.

Int: How closely do you use your curriculum guide? Alberta Education.

Mr. Shelby: What curriculum guide?

Int: Mr. Shelby!

Mr. Shelby: No, I feel, put on pause, no I feel I'm following all the curriculum specifications and even more. I'm going to do all the basics, the grammar. The punctuations all mechanics and a fair amount of background literature so!

Int: That's the way I teach too but you know it's good though I think to challenge yourself and lay it out and say where have I covered this, that and the other thing.

Mr. Shelby: I can go through and show you.

Int: No, I'm just curious to see if you do that at the beginning or have you been teaching long enough that you go on your own personal experience.

Mr. Shelby: Well, when I started my elementary units here I went through and saw that I'm doing all this already.

Int: Do you integrate with your Science very much?

Mr. Shelby: Wherever I can we are always drawing especially when you have the kids all day long.

Int: Who relieves you for prep?

Mr. Shelby: I'm relieved for phys ed and then I split with Mike, I take his social and he takes my religion.

Int: Good, I think that I might, I would like to get a journal going with you after I sit down and listen to this. Maybe I'll have some more questions. More to fill in the gaps.

Mr. Shelby: When I do my song writing unit, I teach them these repetition techniques. I think you saw.

Int: Well I get glimpses of it, you mention the terms and you expect them to show evidence that they have integrated them into their lives.

Mr. Shelby: Yes, then we start writing our own songs and here there techniques to open and there are also techniques to open an essay. You see one of the brightest kids I ever had Jason. I started my year off by saying we started a song unit and I started by saying I could teach everything you need to know about literature and language arts with songs all year.

And the guy said go for it. So we started doing a lot of song studies and tying it together and he really enjoyed that but he was the smartest kid I ever taught in my life. I really enjoyed that. He did some incredible assignments for me in song writing raps.

Int: Well Curtis is pretty keen. He thinks that your the greatest because

Mr. Shelby: I'm his dad.

Int: Ya, you're his dad but how did he word that, Mr. Shelby, he likes all the things that I like. Nothing like being egocentric. It's not that he's picking up on what you like.

Mr. Shelby: When I really walk in there I become one of the kids.

Int: But you have such a good rapport with the kids and your discipline I'm amazed When you said last day I was here that you were going to chew them out that was not chewing out in my terms.

Mr. Shelby: A gentle chewing out.

Int: But you certainly got your point across. Your respect for the kids.

Mr. Shelby: With all these adults in the class they are starting to respond. Ah, my correction, is very gentle. There's a fantasy there too. Like I'm doing a John Wayne imitation. I'm Uncle Shelby and Uncle Shelby is upset. I keep the fantasy going and they really love that. They seem to like that I never take the mask off and say you guys are going to get it.

Int: No the atmosphere changed right away they could tell you meant business. The atmosphere was such that they toned down and listened. Now Ms. Fortin was saying that she does a lot of disciplining.

Mr. Shelby: Well, she's not sure of her role and I'm being gentle with her too. She thinks she has to discipline the whole class and she doesn't. She's just there for some problem students but she's a teacher by nature. Her dads a principal. She's often tempted to go to a kid whose kind of looking like he's not paying attention or he doesn't have a pen and make him do it, where would she not be there I would eventually get to that kid with a comment and get back into the lesson. You know she's not understanding her role yet. I'm also allowing a few of those things and we'll evaluate the situation together and talk about it. But if I do have heavy duty discipline. I do it out of the class. Like a kid that's being obnoxious I won't scold him openly I'll take him out. Do it privately with phone calls suspensions and stuff, I keep it friendly inside.

Int: Certainly, I am learning. I'm a lot too direct that way Talk to Mr. Black. He's the guy to study. He just has a very,

Mr. Shelby: He's got a knack and he's always talking. He's got an irony setting over their heads and the kids are reaching for it. A very subtle humour. Very intelligent humour.

Int: Are you finding this pretty chaotic with all of us there.

Mr. Shelby: No, I am actually kind of enjoying it. It puts extra pressure on me to really zero in on an perform.

Int: I don't know you know, if I'm going to find what I had anticipated with my hypothesis. And I think one of the things was the big mistake I've made in focusing, well you have read my proposal, was to think of the kids prior knowledge, what they know what they came into your room with, as being something that was stable and confined. And that I could observe it like a scientist. Something that I know from all the theory that it is constantly changing and constantly changing with what they are getting from you in the classroom. So I think what I might be focussing on is only what I have been observing, of what you have covered and in that time frame to see if I see evidence through their work of growth. With the word roots, to see if I notice that vocabulary coming out, or talking with the kids, if they feel they are getting more out of that. If you happen to notice any examples of work they are handing in where you are seeing evidence of that they are tuning in to what you are giving them and responding I'd appreciate it.

Mr. Shelby: Other than the other we mentioned just now my kids bringing books up to me.

Int: Ya, that sort of stuff, just subtle maybe I might miss as a teacher because I am looking at so many things at once. You know you can sometimes look at the growth of each child I just can't do that.

Mr. Shelby: Okay, and I'm not tailoring what I say directing to you. This was my approach before you came. With The Neverending Story. I think that kind of crystalizes everything right there having the students see themselves through the story and when they come out after spending a year with you they have discovered some things about themselves.

Mr. Shelby: I'll tell you some things in the novel. In the story there is a dragon and his name is the Smaug and we talk, oh ya. In The Neverending Story he has the power, the character in the story, the little boy, he has the power to do whatever he wants. So he has this knight friend who has no dragon to fight and he wants to win this lady over, so he creates a dragon. He creates a big monster and called him Smaug. And I became the Smaug. When I'm angry, I'm the Smaug. I point up there at the dragon poster and kids will come back to me in junior high they'll refer back to that and they'll keep the fantasy going. I feel that's important because they're familiar with literature they continue to make allusions.

Int: But they know what reality is?

Mr. Shelby: Yes, Yes,

Int: They know the value of fantasy.

Mr. Shelby: And they remember the stories we read and talked about.

Int: That's really important.

Mr. Shelby: A lot of kids come back and talk to me and because I'm continually fantasizing in the classroom about things and they know its always tongue in cheek. They come back and make allusions to me.

Int: I'm amazed about how deadpanned these kids are though about some of your comments. I'm just roaring back there because I know your being tongue in cheek. Have they become so used to you that they don't respond anymore? Is it because they've missed it altogether? Do you feel its gone by or

Mr. Shelby: Well they know I'm, using humour to tell them your not focussing in, on what we should be doing here.

Int: Do you notice a big change in atmosphere when I'm in or not?

Mr. Shelby: No, No.

Int: They are just that way.

Mr. Shelby: Today in French we were really playing it up. We were having a lot of fun. They were rolling in the isles.

Int: Oh, good, because they seem so quiet. They just seem so passive as a group.

Mr. Shelby: I think they are just being well behaved.

Int: That's nice to see but I wouldn't want them to be restricted that they are not being themselves.

Mr. Shelby: Oh, no, they can be quite active.

Int: But I haven't seen that maybe I'll have to come in the afternoons when they are wound up. With their sugar.

Mr. Shelby: Ya, they do get wound up. That's why I start with Math right after lunch. Something very structured.

Int: That's one thing Curtis said to me. That he liked you because you don't put a lot of emphasis on Math, but he said it's important don't get me wrong.

Mr. Shelby: Oh, even in Math, I'll use their names and make Math problems around them. So even there it's storytelling.

Int: For myself, because I'm really learning a lot of your technique about how you are dealing with kids and their work. What do you do with kids who don't have their work done?

Mr. Shelby: They, well we put their names on the blackboard and we choose one of them to clean up for the day. And they usually will do the work before they go home in their spare time. So they take it on themselves to do that and if they don't? If they don't it will be an after-school detention and a phone call home, and I do phone home.

Int: What amazes me about you is that the fact that you seem to be, you do that in such a subtle way but you seem to be aware of exactly which kids. Sometimes I look at them and think, that kid hasn't done anything all class but you obviously know they haven't done anything.

Mr. Shelby: Yah, pretty well most of the time.

Int: You know its a total you should do this sometime. It's a total different perspective as a teacher, to sit and watch someone else do things.

Mr. Shelby: Yah, its a good idea you talk to other people and you get some good ideas.

Int: But also to see, really what your role is up there. Like things that you have to tune into. I mean I do that instinctively when I'm teaching I mean you don't think of it in those terms. I don't think that I am juggling 25 things. So watching you do it is interesting to see different techniques compared to my own.

Mr. Shelby: Well you know we're in the T.V. age and the kids are being used to being entertained so we have to perform more. When I just started teaching I could get along with a very dry lessons straight by the book straight by the curriculum guide and I could get away with it. These kids tune out so quickly. They are so used to a Robin Williams so you become Robin Williams. You have to get up there I find personally. Like if you really want to win them over I knew I could make them behave before be quite straight.

Int: But it's having the humour.

Mr. Shelby: I want them to love language as much as I do.

Int: The, something slipped out of my head. Are we in a panic for time?

Mr. Shelby: No we are not in a panic. The student teacher is there and she's getting some valuable experience.

Int: I bet.

Mr. Shelby: She's got radio experience. She's got a nice voice so, she came from a school where she had ten discipline problems. Ten severe discipline problems. She's got pussy cats compared to that.

Int: She seems mature and very self confident and that helps. That will be a big help so you won't have to spend the time.

I know it was, time. You obviously have things all laid out and you've done things before and you've worked through them. Do you find that you monitor and adjust?

Mr. Shelby: Always.

Int: All the way through.

Mr. Shelby: I change every year a bit. If I see there's an interest in an area I'll go that way and all the time I know what I'm getting at. I'm getting at grammar I'm getting at the mechanics of writing I'm getting at themes. I'll follow them wherever they go as much as I can.

Int: Do you switch novels then each year? Do you change or do you find you stick to these?

Mr. Shelby: I'm starting to settle on these. The kids really do like them. If in the future there is no interest I'll switch novels again. Because I get bored too.

Int: Oh yes, you must after awhile and you must get frustrated if you have a keen group and then to see the response of a weak group, which may be what is happening this year.

Mr. Shelby: This is a very weak group weak in study skills, and weak in attention span. Like I would walk into the room last year and there was nobody following the lesson. They were climbing the walls so this year just to have them sit and looking kind of passive is a change for these guys.

Int: It has been.

Mr. Shelby: The next thing is to sit there and be actually excited and turned on.

Int: That will come, I mean it still is pretty early in the year isn't it and I see a well with it class. I can see where you are working on the frustrating things of housekeeping and binders in order and all that stuff. If they are weak in those areas then you're going to have to spend more time.

Don: John was impressed.

Mr. Shelby: Oh yah, why did he come

Don: Oh he came out to see me this morning for a visit. He phoned me yesterday so I said come on in before nine so he got here around twenty to eight and he wanted to see around the school a bit.

Mr. Shelby: Ya, if I could have caught him outside I would have asked him for a bit of money. I asked him and in the library and he gave me $100.00 for the play.

Int: John Smith?

Don: He did?

Mr. Shelby: Ya a couple of years back remember he gave us money and added it to our grant we didn't get anything from

Richard Stewart so he gave us some money. I think it was $200.00. He was very impressed.

Mr. Shelby: That's good. He walked in on our model parliament and there was a kid standing there with a big axe.

Int: Oh wonderful.

Mr. Shelby: There was Rose sitting on the throne. I do that quite often. It's government and the kids are learning about government. It's a good way to learn it.

Int: Oh ya, that's such a dry topic to teach. If you don't have the students involved in that. I couldn't imagine standing at the front lecturing.

Mr. Shelby: In junior high and senior high, when I taught the kids hated government anything to do with government so I started when I cam back to elementary. I stuck a hat on a kid and said your the king, your George the 3rd. You have to run Canada. You have to choose someone to help you run the country then I stuck a hat on another kid and that made a difference just to say, role playing and they started enjoying social studies and from there we developed some model parliament. Because otherwise they do hate it.

Mr. Shelby: You've got to turn kids on not off.

Int: That would tie into the power thing to having the power and that role.

Mr. Shelby: I try to share power with the kids. Give them responsibilities. Have them make some decisions so that they feel they are part of the class.

Ray: Does Rose share it with anyone else.

Int: She's a curious one. She's going to be interesting as the emperor to see how she uses her power. She certainly has a lot of power.

Mr. Shelby: Yes, she decides who can sit beside her. She signs the bills into law. She also can give the ministers orders for the day and she told the kids today "you guys to be nice to Rocky and she said "Jack is not too bad of a kid after all." Be nice to Jack. Leave him alone and after that. Then after that she put Jack on the couch beside her. So I don't know if she is playing a game to impress is but like she is smart enough that she might just change but slowly she's going to test you.

Mr. Shelby: Oh definitely, and she likes hitting a wall and she can't go any further. But I think if she knows she can't go anywhere, and if she's not losing self esteem she'll change. If she's losing self esteem then.......

Mr. Shelby: We don't belittle her. We are very positive in there. That's what I think that's what she'll do. You know this activity of having an emperor in class is based on The Neverending Story. Every person who reads the book becomes the emperor of the kingdom and they have power to make decisions and rule and Old emperors who end up lost in the story because they haven't been able to find what they are really wanted in life. We play with this as well in Neverending Story.

Int: Do you find that once you get together for the kids do they see the theme or not?

Mr. Shelby: This is the first year I am working towards Neverending Story before I used to start with it but I found the reading level quite high and kids were not getting it. This year I am saving it towards the end. To put it all together.

Int: I am curious, I think I'll come back and talk to you again to see if you really notice that all the prep because what you are doing is building background knowledge.

Mr. Shelby: Building towards the themes.

Int: Concepts towards Neverending Story to see if it goes for them. To see if you are getting comments from them to see if like wow, this is like being emperor here or whatever you have done with them. The power thing especially. That will be interesting to see how that comes out. See how they use that power, that's an interesting thing having Rose, having that type of person become the emperor.

Mr. Shelby: Well they all take their turns.

Int: Well I know they do but for her that's an interesting role, because she wants power.

Mr. Shelby: Yes and she has leadership qualities.

Int: She has great leadership qualities.

Mr. Shelby: She's very bright.

Int: I remember her from last year, I know from the playground and the run in and the things that you have and that type of child is such a challenge. I always, like I can't stand the headaches of this type of discipline problem but the challenge is certainly there for you to win that type of person over.

Mr. Shelby: This class is really putting pressure on me to do the best job that I could ever do and I feel that I really am putting my act together this year as far as giving the kids a real good fun year. But a good learning year as well.

Int: You put in lots of hours, Mr. Shelby don't you?

Mr. Shelby: Not too bad. Not more than anybody else.

Int: Well you arrive here at 7:00 and go home at 9:00.

Mr. Shelby: No, No.

Int: Diana says you sleep here.

Mr. Shelby: She's pulling your leg. Luckily I have experience as a teacher and that helps me a lot. Oh ya, I can do a lot of planning changing gears in a lesson. Go to another area but I'm still covering the curriculum.

Int: Sure that's experience talking.

Mr. Shelby: Ya, experience helps a lot. If I was unexperienced and tried to run all this stuff I think I'd be spending more hours here.

Int: Some of the students have been saying that they are having parts in the operetta. How do yo make those decisions, what have you done?

Mr. Shelby: They're in if they come to practice and they have an interest. We keep track.

Int: Ya, I know but you don't have a set number for the play. You try to accommodate everyone.

Mr. Shelby: Try to ya, we usually end up with about seventy which is quite a bit, but we have 120-130 coming out for auditions and these kids just drop out because of lack of interest. They realize its work so they drop out.

Int: It's always interesting to get involved. I really appreciate you doing this with me I know its an extra load.

Mr. Shelby: It's good ,it's giving me time to reflect to put into words what I what I really feel about the program.

Int: Ya, that's something we don't get a change to do, reflect.

Mr. Shelby: Well when you have a student teacher you do a bit of that to.

Int: Ya, that's why I love having student teachers I always have taken them on. But because the questions that they ask . Well it makes you start thinking because you do things automatically after awhile.

Mr. Shelby: If you want to see how they are performing without me around you should go now and I'll stay here.

Int: Ya, that might be interesting then I'm going to pull Travis.